ALL-STORY

Combined with MUNSEY

Dec. 28

Love Stories of the American Girl

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Stories by

Mary Frances Doner
Hagar Wilde
Eleanor Elliott Carroll

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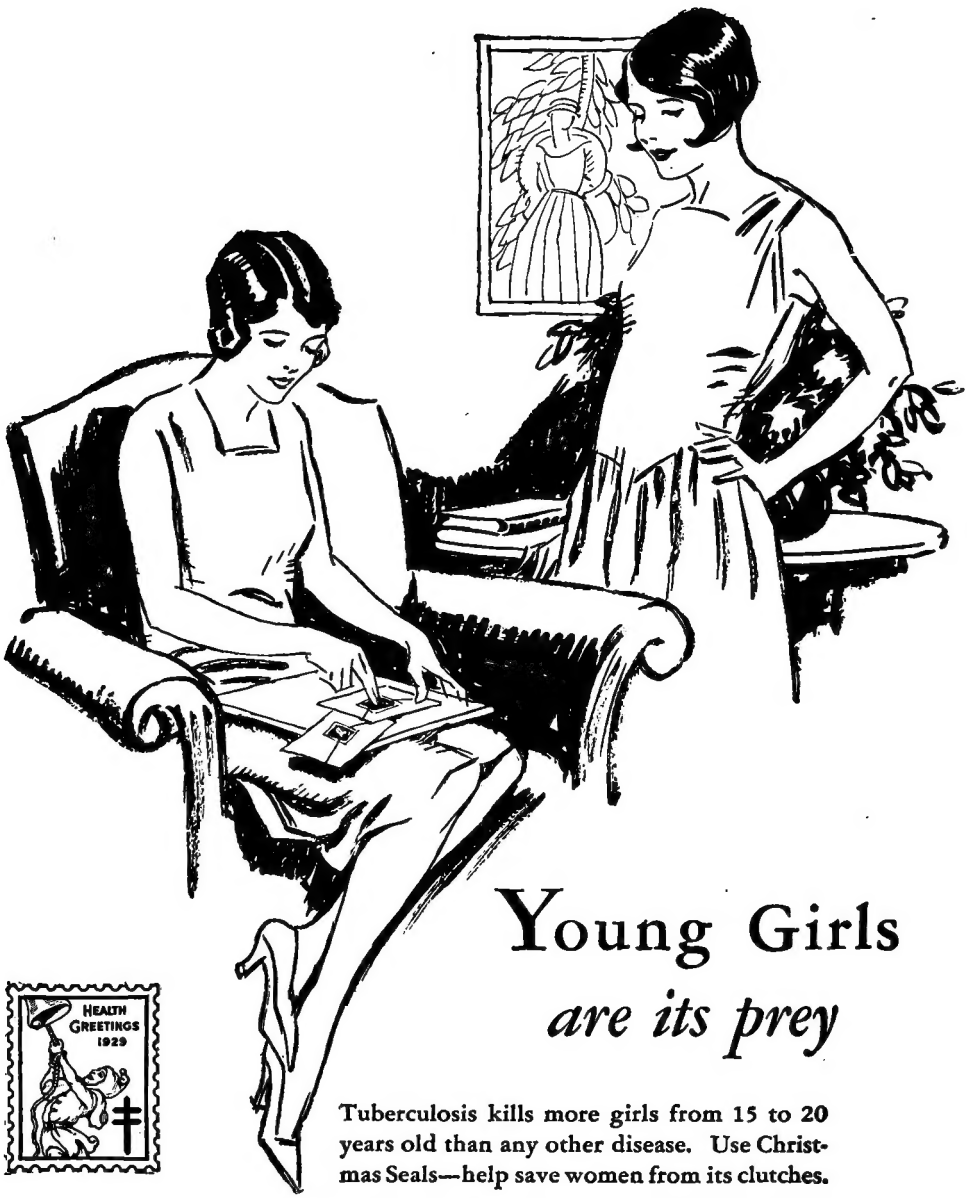

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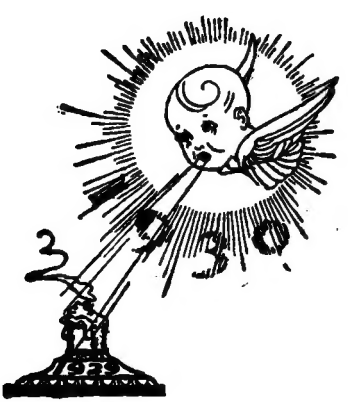
New Year's Rosary

TWELVE months of faith and hopes and dreams,
Of mystic, wondrous days
Through which the sun of promise streams
Its wealth of golden rays.

I count them over, one by one,
Rosary of the year,
Each dawn so many hours begun—
To love you in, my dear!

A. Leslie



Everything But Love

Can a girl buy happiness with the man she loves? When wealth came to Rose she thought to claim the love that had passed her by

By Mary Frances Doner

CHAPTER I

SHE stood in the chill dusk, with brilliant early stars rocking in the windy heavens, waiting. For a week now she had seen him pass. David Marsh. That name—a thread of melody, a robin's song, the first pale blur of dawn in a dark sky. David Marsh— As a lost child warms frozen fingers above a welcome flame, she whispered that name over and over again to herself. David—

What was his voice like—his smile? Did he sing songs, play notes, talk nonsense while people chuckled at his wit? Or was he quiet and contemplative, lonely—sometimes? David—

The girls in town were all excited over the new arrival. She had heard them from behind the counter in Ardfeldt's lingerie shop, where she worked. "Yes, of course, and to-morrow night the Warings are giving a dinner for him. They want to marry Lola off!" Laughter. "If I'm any judge, David Marsh isn't marrying a Barrytown girl —with all the mob who're probably crazy about him back East! He takes girls for granted, you can see that. His uncle and aunt are anxious to have him stick seriously to business, now that he's here—"

"Business!" A little laugh. "When that gentleman sticks to business send me word, will you? Except the business of dancing, for he is a wow!"

"Well, why not? He's never done much else—"

"Oh, you two have it all figured out, haven't you?" came the laughing query. "Who wants to step out of Harvard and bury himself in the wilds of the middle West? He's crazy about flying. That's all he talks about—"

"And his father insists that he learn the salt business from the ground up. Just a notion of Marsh, Sr.—so his son will know *some* business and keep out of mischief. He's tried everything else with him. The old gentleman, so I hear, is filthy with money. His Aunt Somerset was telling my mother—"

"His aunt would love to manage him if she could!" decided another. "Mrs. Somerset is noted for that; but I think she's picked the wrong victim this time."

"Well, David Marsh isn't in a position where he can protest very much. This is his last chance, so the gossip goes—" came the laughing remark from a pretty debbie as she lighted a cigarette and tossed some cobweb stockings toward the listening girl behind the counter. "Four pairs of these —eights—" And without a pause: "David Marsh has tried his austere daddy's patience too far. He's gone the limit with his tricks at college, and now the old gentleman demands a show-down. Either David does his stuff and does it right, or he's out in a cold, cold world."

She stopped sharply at sight of the familiar figure, her heart thudding

"Oh, but his Uncle Somerset wouldn't see him starve—"

"His Uncle Somerset, if you ask

me, is probably encouraging the reign of terror," decided another.

"And he wants to fly—" said the dreamy girl sadly. "Isn't it just too filthy to expect him to love salt above everything else in the world?"

"Can't you just see him in an aviator's uniform—sweeping along the ground and soaring up to the clouds? Here—Jan, how about these sachets? You're always borrowing mine." And tossing several to the girl behind the counter: "Charge, please, and wrap them quickly, will you? We're in a frightful hurry."

She remembered it now word for word, as she waited here in the dusk—the girl behind the counter. They had seen her frequently there in the little shop, but she stood on the wrong side of the counter — as she lived on the wrong side of the bridge, and she didn't count. Rose Barker. Just some one to serve quietly, quickly, efficiently. Not some one who had a heart and longings, tears to shed, loneliness to conquer—

She laughed against clenched hands. He wouldn't know. He would pass so close, so close — she could reach out and touch his sleeve. He'd never know. So close that she could see the healthy red of his cheek. David—

AND then, while she had been dreaming, he had swung along the street from the big salt office on toward the bridge beyond which he lived with the Somersets, wealthiest people in town—in that huge old house on the crest of the hill above the river, where gay people gathered and servants hustled about and fine motors purred softly up the drive. And suddenly the gulf that separated them yawned wider, more wide—she could not wait longer to bear the exquisite pain of seeing him so close, of hearing his brisk tread. She turned and fled through the deepening twilight along the path that led to Rafferty's Lane and out toward the country, hugging to her lonely heart the strange new pain that the sight of him had brought.

Shadows here, kind, shielding shadows. She dropped down wearily on the stump of a tree and clung to it with chilled fingers and looked up hungrily at the rocking stars. The cold, clean wind flung itself against her and she threw back her head to greet its stimulating strength. Filling her lungs with it, she sprang up and ran along the lane, gloating in this freshness after the long weary day in the stuffy shop where she worked.

Turning then, she started back. It was late. Her father would be cross. He hadn't been well. That cold— This new fancy had led her along the lane each evening after work lately—since David Marsh had dropped on Barrytown as a star might fall— To dream of him here in the stillness of this beauty—it was a luxury she could not deny herself.

Swinging along, she stopped sharply to see him sitting disconsolately on the old rail fence that skirted the lane.

He glanced up, smiled vaguely at her. "Aren't you afraid of bears? It's getting dark."

"I like the dark," she heard herself say through the rising thunder in her heart. Her mouth was dry, her hand shook; a dizzy weakness possessed her. She tried to smile—

His laugh was scornful, though she sensed he was not thinking of her. "Darkness and oblivion—synonyms for Barrytown. Of all the God-forsaken holes—" He slid down off the fence, thrust his hands in his pockets. "Saturday—the first Saturday in No-

vember, and the big game on. The bunch all turning out—November sunshine on Soldiers' Field—"

"You're lonesome, aren't you?" timidly.

"I'm sick of the whole darn business!" he shouted, and his voice echoed down the deserted road. "I'm sick of life—and this gaff about making something of yourself and getting somewhere through your own efforts. What does it all amount to when you're young and happy and every one you know is having a good time? Tell me that!"

He wasn't talking to her, though he seemed to address her. He was releasing the flood of bitterness that had stormed within him since his arrival in Barrytown.

An old wisdom that Rose had learned dropped from her lips now. "Haven't you found out yet that life isn't just a matter of having a good time?"

"You sound like my uncle!" he snapped. "I guess it's the habit around here to preach. Run along, Aimée McPherson. Don't let me keep you." He lit a cigarette and turned his back on her.

She started down the road, a lump in her throat. Why had she said that to him? And yet—

On her impressionable mind a picture had been drawn. She would never forget it. Mad, gray eyes, a firm, stubborn mouth, an unforgetable smile, a hand that was a gentleman's hand, long and firm and brown, a magnificent body that had raced many times across a gridiron.

Of course, she would never see him again. She laughed miserably to herself. If he had known who she was—if he had known!

"Hey, wait!" came the belligerent shout. "Don't go off like that! I didn't mean to be rough."

She waited — as she would always wait at the sound of his voice until the day she died. She waited, with life hushed in her veins and hands clenched at her sides; waited without turning.

HE came up beside her presently. "This is the first time I've let go since I reached this rotten town. I'm—sorry!"

She turned and smiled at him. "Why? We all have to let go some time or other. I didn't blame you." And adroitly dismissing the subject, she asked him: "Have you seen any bitter-sweet along here? I'm looking for some. That—that's why I came."

"I don't know a bitter-sweet berry from a carnation," he admitted with a boyish laugh. "But—I do know you've got pretty eyes, and I like that funny little hat you're wearing, and I'd like to see you in a red dress all soft and shimmery, and slippers with diamond buckles — say, what's your name, girl?"

"Rose."

She saw the picture he had made, and was breathless. If she were that girl, the girl he pictured, and lived on the hill in that nice white Trimble house, for instance, and had a mother who poured tea on Thursdays, and a father who presided at a long, mahogany table in dinner clothes each evening, then, very remotely, there might have been a chance for something besides this fairy tale hour.

But—

"Rose—Barker," she added slowly.

"Good!" He slipped an arm through hers. "I'll speak to my aunt to-night. If she's in a particularly good humor, be prepared for an invitation to dinner to-morrow evening. We'll go to the

movies afterward, and you can pick up some of your friends there and we'll go somewhere and dance. No use talking, I'm fed up with these made-to-order evenings. And—I like your eyes."

Oh, well! An hour was an hour. He couldn't know until he got home, and that couldn't spoil this moment. When you lived in a world where crumbs spelled the feast of life, you got used to crumbs— Twilight along the country lane, with a new young moon cutting the purple sky with its golden sickle; with stars powdering the broad heavens, and the strangely sweet smell of burning leaves diffusing spicy fragrance that hung on the chill air enchantingly. No, she would never forget it. Not this hour. This was hers. Unmarred. Divine. Savoring of no yesterday, no to-morrow. Magic hour. Incredibly beautiful. Incredibly—hers!

They found branches of bittersweet, and he filled her arms with them, and they roamed along the lane back toward town such a short distance away. He said: "I'll help you home with them."

And she said: "No—" quite finally, definitely.

And he laughed. "Of course, I'd forgotten that daughters are warned against handsome strangers. Assure your parents that my aunt and uncle will vouch for me. I implore you. For the first time since I've come to Barrytown, I see light. Rose—I've begun to think you're swell!"

Trembling, she smiled back at him. Oh, for the flippancy of the Barrytown girls; the quick, gay retorts they gave so cleverly. She could only smile at him and say, "Good-by!—" for fear emotion would betray her; then turn swiftly and flee down the hill, down along the dark road toward the bridge and the shack she called home.

CHAPTER II

PINDY BARKER sat in the darkness rubbing his cold hands together. A chill had settled on the little room. The new moon limned the shack and the piled, cluttered yard with a pale light, and squandered its delicate silver on the hideous squalor of the most disfiguring spot in Barrytown.

Down beyond the bridge it sat, just off the main street—Pindy Barker's shack. On an unpaved lane, with a makeshift fence of barbed wire to discourage prowling, mischievous boys, the shack sagged into disconsolate lines as if it wearied of living and longed for a stout wind or a bolt of lightning to end its misery.

Its boarded façade was a crazy-quilt of odd pieces of lumber that Pindy had picked up in his travels. Its chimney was a cracked piece of tiling that had been left at the side of the road by careless workmen. Its yard was piled high with every imaginable type of junk to be found in and around that countryside. And there was a stable in the far corner where a half starved horse was feebly protected from the weather.

But the windows of that little shack put to shame the shabby exterior. They shone spotlessly, and a red geranium stood bravely in each one. The curtains might be worthless, but they were clean as snow and heavily starched to give them body. The steps were scrubbed and the floors were scrubbed, and the pitiful bits of crockery that partially filled the cupboard were always put neatly away.

The small air-tight stove gave out

good heat—when Rose was there to feed it with wood, while her father sat by groaning and sighing at her extravagance. The lamp chimneys always sparkled, the lamps were always full. As far as she was able, Rose made a home for them, bearing with the anger and threats of the father whose miserliness had turned his mind.

"Where've you been?" he demanded, from the dark corner where he sat huddled now, shivering, his pinched face blue with cold.

She hurried to light the fire. The cold, drafty house chilled her through. Her teeth chattered. "You'll be terribly sick, father," she warned him. "This place is dreadful—why, when I touch the shovel it's like ice—"

"Yes—sure," he sneered. "Well, you're lucky to have a shovel to touch—do you know that? But for me, you'd have starved to death long before this."

"You're my father," she couldn't help reminding him.

His ugly cackle shot along her nerves like tearing silk. "Please, father," she begged, "don't sit here in the cold like this any more. It gets so bitter you can't get it warm—"

He shuddered and laughed again. "Arthur didn't mind it. He sat here with me quite a spell."

"Do you mean to say you wouldn't light the fire—and Mr. Newton here to see you?"

He nodded, grinned at her with triumph.

CHILLED as she was, she paused curiously and watched her father. She had never been able to explain to herself this strange friendship—if it was a friendship. Arthur Newton was a respectable old figure in Barrytown, the oldest lawyer, a bachelor with some married nieces in Chicago. That was all Rose knew about him—except that he was always very nice to her when she saw him, and that occasionally he saw her father and had long talks with him. It was useless to question Pindy Barker. He laughed at her curiosity. But to-night she felt the sting of humiliation more keenly than ever before. What did Arthur Newton think of such people?

The old man's cough brought Rose back with a start. A cough that rattled and tore at him and left him weak and gasping. Yet, "Here—here—" he cried out, as she poured oil on the wood in the stove, "stop — *stop* — you're wastin' it—stop—"

She went on stubbornly. "You're going to be warm whether you like it or not, father. And so am I. This place is bitter—"

He snatched the oil can out of her hand and put it out of sight, grumbling, scolding. Held one match toward her. "And don't let it go out, 'cause you'll not get another!"

But years of this had taught Rose to be careful—and resigned. In a minute the fire was roaring and, in spite of his apparent indifference to the temperature, Pindy hugged the little stove and chafed his numb hands and breathed heavily.

Rose made some hot soup. Some meat from the little ice chest was missing. She shook her head sadly. He had put it out of sight. Then they would not eat so much. It would go farther to-morrow. She knew—

SHE lighted a lamp in the lean-to kitchen and placed one, too, beside her father where he sat in the living room near the stove. It sent a mellow cheer through the cold room, and the shadows softened the harsh

outlines of homeliness. But the moment her back was turned, he blew out the lamp. She was used to it. She had tired of complaining. He had ceased to be normal, long ago. Hoarding had turned his mind. But it became unbearable, the loneliness and poverty.

"I've been hungry for an hour," complained her father now. "If they're keepin' you later at work, they must give you more money. *I want it!* We're starvin' to death here, freezin'—because we need money." He stirred, shambled across the floor to where she stood. "You got paid to-day. Where's the money?"

A streak of stubbornness showed itself in Rose. Driven to the wall by wretched circumstance, she turned and faced her father. "I'm keeping it this week, myself. I need a new coat. I've worn this one three years. It's cold—*cold*—and I'm ashamed. I'll lose my job if I keep on looking shabby. You can't have it, father. I've made up my mind."

He rubbed his hands together, brooding silently, fixed her with a sharp, searching eye. "You talk to me like that—you talk that way when I'm depending on what you make to keep us alive?"

"I'll pay the grocer," she whimpered, terrified at the wild look. "I'll buy the things, myself. But don't demand every cent I earn. I've got to have *something* for myself. You've got money—you *must* have some—"

The mad shriek of his laughter frightened her as always. He knew it. He knew he could win.

"I—have money?" He came closer, caught her hand cruelly in his. "Would I be livin' like this—with money? Money—" He said the word over again, let it roll across his tongue like a succulent morsel. "Give it to me, Rose—give it to me—" The greedy, unnatural cry that made her blood creep. With a sob, she picked up her purse and threw it across the room. "Take it—take every cent—only—don't laugh like that—*don't!*"

HIS bright, beady eyes leered greedily as he snatched the worn leather bag, dumped the money out on the table, fondled the few bills and let the silver and coppers drop through his fingers again and again.

"That's a good girl! Now we're safe—safe—"

He went into the next room and locked the door. His room. For a long time he stayed there in the bitter cold. And Rose stood over the fire, stirring the thin soup, which was weak and without nourishment, because Pindy Barker had slyly hid all but a little meat.

He came back again finally, chilled through, teeth chattering, one hand at his throat, where a key glistened—the key to the top dresser drawer. Rose knew. It was always locked. He slept beside that dresser, and the slightest sound sent him bolt upright in bed, a hand at his throat, where the key hung on a little black cord.

That's where her money went, and the money he made on the junk he gathered. There must be some money there—a few thousand, probably. If only they could live decently—

Like a famished wolf he snatched up the bowl she poured for him and gulped down the steaming liquid till his eyes stung with tears.

It was Rose's lot. She had borne with it since she could remember. She could fly from it, of course. But she could not leave him in his helplessness, his madness.

She sank wearily into the chair across from him after she had put her own shabby sweater about his shoulders. He was a child to care for. He was her father. If she deserted him, what would become of him? The townspeople despised him, considered him a disgrace, and she shared his ignominy. She was Pindy Barker's daughter, the girl who lived in the shack beyond the bridge, where Barrytown's slums began.

What right had she to dream, and hope, and love? And laughter swept over her now, as her hand crept toward her father's on the worn red cloth, and she clutched it hungrily with a terrible loneliness. Laughter—

"What's the matter?" he asked through chattering teeth, fever making his cheeks a strange dark red.

But she did not raise her head. "I just happened to think of something funny—" And a little song went lilting through her tortured mind, a song with words that were, "David—David—"

She got her father to bed presently. The fever rose. He tossed and groaned in distress. That cold—he'd had it for weeks. And now that he had this new chill—

Something told her that this was his last illness. He had disregarded too long the rules of living. He had starved his body, starved his soul, listened to the mad urge of possession until he had hoarded the breath of his body, his life.

Terrified at last, she fled out of the shack and up beyond, across the bridge to the drug store, where perhaps they would suggest something that might help. In terror of her father, she dared not consult a doctor. The expense— Even a small fee of two dollars seemed Gargantuan to her father. Experience had taught her the folly of attempting that.

As she passed along the main street, she came to a canopy stretched across the walk leading into the town's one smart club. A car had stopped at the curb, and a young man and woman alighted and made their way along, laughing. Georgia Hoyt—the one member of the town's smart set who recognized Rose. She had rather good reason to.

Rose stopped sharply. Georgia was on David's arm—David Marsh—

"Hi!" called Georgia gayly, seeing Rose just beyond. "If it isn't Rosie-Posie. I've meant to bring those books I promised."

Rose stood paralyzed, realizing the sharp contrast between herself and Georgia; Rose in her shabby coat and the much-worn red beret.

"David," Georgia was saying, "this is Rose Barker—Rose, this is David Marsh," she went on easily. And yet not by the flicker of an eyelash did either betray their earlier meeting. Georgia—all fragrance and loveliness and beauty, on David's arm—

Rose smiled with an effort, tried to speak.

"Yes, David," Georgia continued, smiling kindly at Rose, "this is the girl of whom you heard at dinner. Remember Lola discussing the skating incident?"

"Oh, the girl who saved you from drowning?" It was the first word David had spoken. His eyes appraised Rose now, curiously. His glance was impersonal, detatched.

"Yes, when we were just kids," said Georgia. And then to Rose: "We were relating our most harrowing experiences to-night at dinner. That was mine—and isn't it strange I should

meet you just now? How have you been, Rose? I see you and promise to bring you books, because I know how much you love to read—and then something happens. To-night I realized more than ever, I think, how much I owe you. Why, I would have drowned—"

Georgia never got over the miracle of Rose's courage and that dangerous experience of long ago. She neglected Rose, forgot her entirely unless they happened to meet, then performed a few kindnesses while the mood was on—and allowed the girl to pass completely from her mind.

"Oh, but you wouldn't," put in Rose, trembling with embarrassment and awareness of David Marsh. "Someone would have seen you. I just happened to be there—"

"Hear her!" laughed Georgia. "It was positively the bravest thing in the world, and I shall never forget it. Why—"

"My father is ill," Rose said hurriedly now. She could not stand it longer—the sight of Georgia here in a rich brocade gown and a smothering velvet wrap and glittering slippers, and her pretty dark hair wound in adorable fashion about her lovely head. Georgia Hoyt—a princess, and Rose Barker— A flash of pain swept over her, reminding her of her shabbiness, her unworthiness.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Georgia nodded. "See you again, Rose. I'll stop in the shop to-morrow with the books I promised you."

"Good-night!" said David casually. For a moment, his careless glance rested on Rose. Then they turned away.

Weak with the unexpected encounter, sick with this new unrest, Rose hurried away without glancing back. Georgia Hoyt was of the other world. And David—David—

CHAPTER III

DRIVEN by an urge that would not be denied, she went again at the same time the following day along the road where the bitter-sweet grew; but David did not appear. What madness had prompted her? Didn't he know now, without the question of a doubt, that she was Rose Barker of the shack beyond the bridge? She laughed into the dusky silence of approaching night.

"It didn't matter so much—before. My life—and loneliness—not quite—so much— It was hard. It's always been hard, but I could bear it. Now—oh—" She dropped to the hard cold earth and sobbed out her heart.

But no one heard and no one saw, and in a little while she turned back toward the cosy lights of town and made her way down beyond the bridge where she belonged. Past the street where he lived now, past the big stone house with its broad, lovely grounds, its windows gay and bright, its driveway cluttered with cars.

The Somersets were giving a dinner, probably. There was Lola Waring's gay red cab with wire wheels, shining nickel trimming; there was Sonia Pelletier's smart blue coupé, and Winifred Dean's big sedan. And there were others—Dyke Seastrom's roadster, and Lute Wayland's. Georgia was there, too, probably. Georgia went to everything. The next time she saw Georgia, she would question her slyly, hear the story in detail—the story that would break her heart with its careless magic.

Slowly she walked along, her gaze drawn in fascination to that spot. The

Somerset house was beautiful inside, people said. Dancing to-night, of course. Chiffon and jewels and dinner clothes; candles, maids moving about, men singing and laughing and cutting in on the girls they preferred. Men—David—

She moved on down the main street and the lights seemed to mock her, the laughter of girls as they passed, people— She saw Guy Brown through the window of Collins's grocery store, and her step faltered and she went inside.

Sometimes, Guy's friendly smile dispelled the pain she felt. Sometimes his pleasant friendliness helped. It was more than friendliness; he loved her, she knew. But marriage wasn't for Guy. For there was his mother, who had been overtaken by blindness in her fiftieth year—the third of her widowhood. And there was his sister, Dolly, whose moonlight ride in Dirk Johnston's car had resulted in a collision at Watkin's Bend, and in hopeless invalidism. Guy worked for John Collins in his big grocery store and made enough to keep the three of them alive.

And Rose knew the moments in his life which counted most were those he spent with her.

She asked for a box of salt. She hadn't come in to buy—

"Sure!" Guy raced to get it. She watched him with pity and sadness.

"Anything else?" He was back, smiling happily, nervous before her slow, thoughtful gaze.

"I guess not." Dear Guy! Knowing his sadness, too—his frustration. Carrying on with a smile. "I guess not," she said again.

He glanced at the clock. "I'm going along in a minute, Rose Will you wait?"

She nodded, tapped idle fingers on the counter. Ahead, her eyes fell on little glass jars. Caviar. Anchovies. Partridge paste for canapés. Other delicacies. And she smiled. If you lived down beyond the bridge, you never asked for these things in John Collins's store. You were glad enough to get potatoes and bread, meat for soup and stew, and a cheap blend of coffee. You got along without caviar and such—as you got along without silk frocks and fur coats and motor cars—

She walked along, a bit later, with Guy in the early evening. She knew his happiness, for yesterday she had known her own. It thrilled her to remember the aching wonder of it—of David—

"I've saved enough for that course I was telling you about, Rose," Guy was saying, slipping an arm through hers. "And—talk about a streak of luck! I was delivering groceries up on the hill yesterday, the kid was out to lunch, and there's soft loam up near Somerset's. There was a swell big car stalled in the ditch and I towed it out. The fellow gave me a twenty dollar bill.

"Think of it, Rose—twenty dollars! It was all I needed. I sent the money order to the correspondence school today, and I'm going to start right in. I'm good at figures, and I'll learn to be an expert accountant!" His voice trembled with eagerness. "Lord, if I can only amount to something before—before—" His hunted eyes met hers.

"Of course you'll amount to something, Guy!"

And she was thinking, "Don't love me like this—don't hope, Guy—don't! There isn't any use. Please—don't make me hurt you!"

"Rose—" He slipped his cold, chapped hand around hers, held it close, snatched it for a moment against his cheek. "I want to make good—I've got to—for you!"

"You will make good, Guy." Tears flooded her eyes, tears for him and for herself.

"Don't think it's always going to be like this," he begged. "Don't think there isn't any future, Rose. I'll work. I'll make the grade in spite of everything!"

"Of course!" she said again. "Of course!"

"And some day, if you'll wait for me, we'll show the world—"

And she heard dark laughter in her heart and shrank from it. "Why not?" she demanded bravely. And saw another man's eyes, another man's smile—

"Give me something to hope for, Rose!" The childish pleading in that tone! "You and I—we belong below the bridge. But we'll raise ourselves up—we'll beat fate! That's what makes life interesting—beating the game. You and I—we can't sit out on marble terraces in the moonlight and ride in expensive cars to swell parties and wear stunning clothes now—but some day we can. Oh, Rose—"

She suffered his kiss because it made him happy; because she had always known Guy; because she was the star in his heaven. Why not? Was she to withhold a glimpse of heaven from one whose gray to-day might go on indefinitely?

Home— To-night she sat beside the window in the darkness, without bitterness, without resentment. The light worried her father, and he was very ill. The cold had gone deeper, yet he fought her mention of a doctor until she knew it made him worse. She had made him as comfortable as possible, and now, deprived even of her one great pleasure, reading, she kept watch; for when the fever rose and he grew delirious again she would need someone's help. The Staceys would come and help. They had promised. The Staceys—in another little shack farther on—

One o'clock. Two o'clock. Restless, moaning, suffering with the painful congestion, he dropped off at last into a light sleep.

And she knelt beside her bed with a whispered prayer: "If you could just let me see him again, dear God—once more—like that other day! If you could just let us speak to each other, laugh together for a moment or two — just that— Oh, God! Can't you see us here below the bridge? Must my prayers rise from a grand house on the hill before You can hear them?—"

As she left the shop the next afternoon, she encountered Georgia.

"You're just the one I'm looking for," was Georgia's greeting. "Here are the books, and I've brought this coat along. It's entirely too small for me, and you'd look darling in it. No—don't protest. It's yours. I was afraid I'd miss you at the shop, but mother gave a tea this afternoon and I couldn't make it sooner. I'm supposed to stop at Lola's—"

"You're happy, Georgia," Rose told her. "Your eyes simply dance."

Georgia glanced away, flushing.

"Why shouldn't they? I am happy, Rose—except—oh, dear, there's no one I can really talk to. Everybody tells everybody else. Father is getting stingier by the day. He's even cut my allowance, because he disapproves of my bridge losses. And mother

keeps dangling desirable men before my eyes constantly—and Ed gets everything in the world he wants because he's a man. Brothers have all the luck!"

"Why do you need money, Georgia?" Rose asked. "Haven't you everything in the world you want?"

Georgia laughed hollowly. "I wish I had a million dollars without any strings on it, and I'd leave Barrytown behind forever. Men have the best of things. The house is full of Ed's friends, right now. I'm tired to death of them. You've always got to be doing something to entertain them. I —oh, Rose, isn't David Marsh the handsomest thing in the world? You know, everyone is crazy about him. Lola is making a play for him. He danced with her steadily last night—of course, she's a peach of a dancer; and he's taking her to Muriel's party tonight. It doesn't really mean anything, though—" In Georgia's tone you caught the wistfulness, the undercurrent of anxiety. So Georgia was in love with David! Or was it really love? Georgia was always getting crushes on people.

"His father is simply swimming in money," Georgia went on, embracing this opportunity to talk about David. He's a self-made magnate, and he's determined that David shall repeat the miracle and build up another fortune. David's insane about flying. Now wouldn't you think his father would encourage him in that? It's a great career—oh, hi!" she called out in answer to an impatiently tooted horn at the curb.

Then to Rose, "It's Lola and David Marsh." She waved excitedly at them.

"Come on," called Lola. "We're stopping at Frieda's for cocktails. I've waited for you—"

"Righto! 'By, Rose—see you again."

And Georgia whirled and fled toward the waiting car, tumbled in and rode off in a gale of laughter.

With the remembered glimpse of David smiling out vaguely at her, Rose turned slowly and made her way down toward the bridge.

CHAPTER IV

PINDY Barker's death caused no particular stir in Barrytown. If anything, the townspeople seemed to feel only relief from the daily sight of the old peddler.

The little shack sat in the late fall sunshine with shades drawn, and a neighbor or two coming and going at intervals during the day. They nodded and shrugged and nudged one another as they glanced at Rose. But she seemed oblivious.

As yet these people did not know her absorbing secret. Death was here, grim and fearsome, yet it had wrought a miracle of such stupendous proportions that Rose still felt unable to comprehend it.

There had been that last cry—"I'm goin', Rose—" and after a moment, when she had lifted his head in her arms and forced a stimulant between his faded lips, she heard him say, "It's over, Rose. You're—a good—girl—" His first kind word, his first human word. And fumbling with the black string at his throat, he touched the key that hung there. "The dresser drawer—yours—Rose—" They were his last words.

And now, she sat staring at the bank books that were tied together with an old string: bonds, stocks, mortgages. Envelopes from New York and Chicago, addressed to Arthur Newton, the

one man in town who had bothered with Pindy Barker.

He had sent word that he was coming this morning. She waited, dazed at what these things signified.

"I didn't know just how much Pindy had told you of his affairs," was Arthur Newton's greeting as he seated himself close by and regarded her thoughtfully.

His old eyes leered greedily as he fondled the gold

She held out hands crammed with the effects of that once mysterious drawer. "What does it mean?" she whispered. "All—this! Father gave me the key when he was dying. He was rich—rich—"

"No, my child, he was the poorest of men. His wealth made him poor." He regarded her with a sad smile as he continued:

"All this money—thousands—*thousands*—more than I ever thought was in the world—mine! And the years when we could have been happy and had a pretty home and friends and the respect of people—"

He nodded slowly. "And yet, if he's done nothing more for you, he has shown you your true friends, Rose."

"It was cruel!" she sobbed. "I wanted to be happy—I wanted him to be happy, too! I didn't want riches, just clothes like other girls wear and a real house to live in and nice things in it and friends—now look!" She yielded to tears, the tears that surged through years of rebellion at last. For she was thinking of David Marsh. If—*if*—there might have been a chance that he would love her. But now—

"He's dead," Arthur Newton was saying. "A queer old chap, Pindy Barker. Pathetic. A shock unhinged his mind. There was insanity in the family—his mother, I believe. Died that way, if I remember. I've looked him up—his people. He was the last of some good old homely New England stock. Salt of the earth. His father married a high-bred intellectual who lost her mind. They're all gone now, the Barkers—"

"All but me," put in Rose, with a strange look of fear in her eyes. What

had he said—her grandmother had died *insane!*

"YOU are not a Barker." He watched her through the spectacles that crept down his nose.

"What do you mean?" She sat forward sharply.

"I've gathered the facts with difficulty, Rose," he told her kindly. "I've wondered how long you would stand by old Pindy. Sometimes I've thought you knew the truth. Then again, I realized you didn't. You're a noble girl, Rose—"

"Tell me what you mean—please!" she begged through bewildered tears.

"I'll try to, Rose. Be patient. You must have known that Pindy Barker had a little money put away somewhere. A lingering shred of old Yankee shrewdness sent him to some one who could be trusted with his secret and his holdings. I was amazed at first, I'll admit. He dropped words here and there, and I pieced the thing together.

"He was in love with your mother, deeply in love. She became engaged to him back in Vermont—then ran off with a circus performer one summer. It broke Pindy's heart. He followed the show from town to town that first summer. Secretly. She never knew for a long time. One day, they encountered each other. Pindy had given up his father's business, which would have paid him well. He had given up everything that meant his future, because he loved your mother. At that meeting, he told her she could always count on him. It was possible that he saw she would need that assurance. Already, your father was neglecting her for another member of the circus—a partner in his equestrian act, I believe. Shortly afterward he was killed. And—well, you were born in the spring, and your mother was destitute.

"But Pindy made a home for her, married her—and for a few short months lavished on her the starved love of his soul. But she pined away for the young fool she had married before—and died, and you were left at Pindy Barker's mercy."

"His—mercy," she whispered. "It was generous—and—I loved him—"

The old lawyer nodded. "I know. You wouldn't have stood by him like this if you hadn't. But you've been paid for it, Rose. You've got money to burn."

"My—father—" she said dully. "I don't need pay. I loved him. He was all I ever had. Perhaps he was queer, but—"

"And now," the lawyer went on, "you can live the life you have been denied. You can have a house like other people, and clothes, and your friends can come and see you—"

"Friends—" She shrugged sadly.

"We shall see," said Arthur Newton. "I venture to say you will find that you have friends you never knew about." His smile was grim, thoughtful. "I wonder if old Pindy wasn't right? With all his queerness, he knew one big truth."

SHE bought the Trimble house. It sat on the crest of a hill above the river, gay and confident with its attractive façade, its broad grounds sweeping down to the water, its broad porch and trim windows enhancing its stanch beauty.

She furnished it after the dreams that had haunted her, every precious want miraculously satisfied. Sometimes she could not believe it. Home—her home! With the broad, splendid living

room, books, fireplace, satin hangings that reached the floor—it seemed too marvelous. And the last touch—a shining coupé waited her pleasure in the big two-car garage down past the garden. While Effie, the trim little maid, did the necessary work and answered the door for callers.

For there were callers. Many of them. With studied smiles and curious darting eyes and smooth easy phrases. Rose received them with dignity and graciousness, yet she felt back of it all their patronage. Scorn had given way to curiosity. She was an object of interest now. Her bank account was something to reckon with—

But the proud people in town left her alone. Except Georgia. She was honestly pleased at Rose's good fortune.

"It's too marvelous!" she cried, on visiting the miracle house for the first time. "It's just what you should have had always. I'm mad about it. And such taste—why, mother couldn't do better, herself. Now, Rose, you've simply got to start stepping out!"

"Money can't buy everything, Georgia," Rose said thoughtfully. "The people I would like to know are just amused and—surprised, that's all. I want real friendship."

"Now don't go moralizing," laughed Georgia, yet Rose was conscious of her nervousness. "People are funny, I'll admit. But give them time. When you've had false gods before you all your life, you can't expect to send them crashing to the floor in a minute. Every one will like you when they get to know you—"

She wondered why she listened to Georgia without declaring that such opinions didn't matter any more now than they ever had. She wondered why she didn't say that people could leave her alone if they chose. But she *knew* why—down deep. She knew why she had bought this lovely house where they would all admire it: because David Marsh was here and she wanted him to admire *her* house; because she wanted to live down the disgrace of the weather-beaten shack—because she loved him, because she still hoped in spite of everything!

"IT'S like a fairy tale, Rose!" Georgia danced about clapping her hands excitedly. "I can't believe it. I'm so *glad* for you!" She threw her arms around Rose and held her close.

"Oh, Georgia, I'll never forget your kindness and friendship!" She clung to Georgia, afraid; Georgia, who had everything that life could offer. Georgia, with the security of family, money, friends—

"Nonsense!" laughed Georgia, kissing the damp cheek. "I liked you always. And as far as my kindness is concerned, let's not forget that I'd be sleeping in ye old churchyard if it weren't for one Rose Barker—and listen, there's going to be a party at Sonia's to-night. She told me to bring you."

Sonia Pelletier. Why hadn't she herself invited Rose? Because, Rose knew, Georgia had wheedled her into accepting Rose at all. Because Sonia Pelletier *belonged* and Rose didn't.

"I can't go, Georgia—"

"You can—and *shall!* Here you've been living in self-exile all this time and your father isn't being made one bit happier as a result. You're young, and you need life and laughter and a little fun for a change. You made a big stride forward when you got started here. The thing to do now is to step out and meet people. Why, the

parties this winter are simply gorgeous. It's all on account of David Marsh. Lola is doing her best to land him."

Georgia's eyes were curiously bright as she spoke of David.

"Lola Waring has lots to offer him," Rose heard herself say. Her hands trembled. She ached with the consciousness of her inadequacy. It was so hopeless—

"Lots!" laughed Georgia. "There are seven Warings, don't you know that, silly? And Lola gets one-seventh of her father's estate. And they say—" she laughed through wide, brown eyes, "he has a fascinating habit of forgetting his obligations. An old Spanish custom, I believe."

"But she has a beautiful car and the loveliest clothes—" put in Rose.

"Their credit is good," Georgia informed her. "Oh, Rose, where did you get that heavenly chair—that darling over there in the corner?" She ran over and dropped to her knees beside it, examining it with delight. "It's too precious—a Heppelwhite, I'll swear." Then she sprang up restlessly and went to the piano, dropping to the bench and running accustomed fingers over the keys. She crooned:

> More than you know,
> More than you know,
> Man of my heart, I love you so!

Georgia. Possessing everything Rose lacked. Carelessly possessing the things Rose would have given her life to know. The easy knowledge of things, names, music, people, literature. Lola Waring knew these things, too. She could sing beautifully, so people said. Accompany herself on the piano. She had won a golf cup last summer. No wonder David Marsh found her interesting.

Oh, dear God! Did happiness depend on chance alone? Wasn't there any hope for a girl who had tried to be fair, who had played the game according to the rules, who had seen those years through with Pindy Barker—dear, misguided man?

The money he left had bought *things* for Rose. But not David!

"I've got to run along," Georgia said abruptly now. "But remember, you're coming to Sonia's to-night. I'll stop by for you."

WHEN she had gone, Rose sat before the flames, thinking, wondering, dreaming. Effie came in to put on a fresh log, then stood back primly. "Are you having tea, Miss Barker?" There was the shadow of a smile about the girl's mouth.

Rose studied that smile. Was amusement back of it, scorn? This girl had seen service in the Waring family, the Somerset family. Was she laughing at Rose Barker, who dared presume to the customs of *the* people in town?

Wretched, disturbed by the haunting suspicions, she dismissed the girl abruptly, then suffered over the gesture. For it had betrayed her. She watched the trim figure turn and leave the room. Effie knew things about this life that Rose didn't know. But she would learn them, she *had* to learn them, for somehow she had to become a part of better things, or there was no chance for her—with David—

She sprang to her feet, cupped trembling hands against her lips. "I mustn't let myself think of him like this!" she whispered. "I must forget him. It can't be—ever. He doesn't know I'm alive. Oh, dear God, release me from this madness!"

She glanced about the lovely room, the monument she had built to hope—

to love— And bursting into queer laughter, she ran to the hall and got into the smart 'coon coat and small dark hat and went out along the quiet street.

The cemetery. She would visit her father's grave. Pindy Barker—alone down there, while she spent the money he had saved with such denial.

Breathless, she made her way along, hurried down the main street through two blocks of brightly lighted shops where people nodded and spoke as she passed; past Collins's grocery store, where Guy Brown stood watching her with despair in his honest young eyes, the knowledge of his hopeless defeat— She hurried faster, down toward the bridge. The cemetery lay just beyond.

But as she reached the bridge, she admitted to herself that only the mad desire to see David had brought her here again. Fighting with the taunting, scornful voice down deep inside, she walked on briskly, her eyes on the salt company's office. Employees were leaving. Groups stood outside. Please, God—let him be there—please! Just to see him. That was all—

She moved along woodenly, conscious of his possible nearness. Even in the dusk she knew at last that David was coming along toward her, slowly, with discouraged tread. What had happened? David—

He would have passed her without a word, because his eyes were straight ahead. But she spoke. She had to. She could no more have helped speaking to him than she could have helped breathing.

"Good evening!" she said pleasantly, and passed on with a prayer. "Let him turn, dear God, and speak to me! Just a word—one word—"

"Hello—who—oh, it's you!" He paused, as if undecided whether to stop or go on.

SHE nodded, moved along. Must she leave him like this? Must it ever be but a casual word?

"Wait!" he said, and came up beside her. The wistful beauty of the little white face against the dark fur of her coat was fairer than Lola Waring could ever be. "Things have happened to you, I understand."

"Yes. I lost my father—"

"Sorry," he mumbled, glancing off at a big interurban car that lumbered by at the moment. The flash of lights revealed the clear beauty of her dark eyes, her smooth, pale skin. "Aren't you lost down here now?"

"The cemetery is just beyond. I'm going there."

"Lord—but it's getting late. It's dark down there."

"I don't mind. I'm not afraid."

"I'll go with you," he decided abruptly. "You shouldn't roam around here after dark."

She laughed softly. "Nothing ever happens here." This blinding moment of happiness—David—

"You're right, of course. Nothing ever happens—*here*. Lord, what a prison!"

"You're not getting to like it any better?" she asked.

"Huh!" He threw back his head and laughed hollowly. "Of all the God-forsaken towns!— I'm fed up with the place. Dad thinks this business is great, and he likes the town. I think he spent the night here one time when he needed a long sleep. He says it's where I belong until I learn how to live. You'd think I was ten years old!" He kicked at some weeds as they moved along, hands in pockets. "Wants to live my life for me."

"Well, why don't you just chuck it all and do what you want to do?" she asked.

He grinned down at her and shook his head. "Sure. Doesn't it sound simple? Eliminating, for the moment, the question of iron men, zymolins, the long green—in other words I'm open to suggestions. Just what do you suppose I would use for money?"

"Money?" She laughed childishly. "You could earn money—doing what you want to do, couldn't you?"

"The child is going whimsical on me," he told nobody in particular. "Earn money—doing what you want to do! That's an idea. I hadn't considered it. I'll tell that one to my grandchildren. Shall we discuss Harold Lloyd's glasses next or the ride of Paul Revere? Personally, I haven't any choice."

"Do you think it's so impossible to —earn money?" she asked through the smile his words provoked.

"My dear, I haven't taken any time off to date, thinking on that subject. It is with humiliation and embarrassment that I confess this thing. If the dollars I spent at college were laid end to end, they'd make a ribbon long enough to tie around the moon—and that's a mild estimate. If I had it now, I'd buy me the neatest set of planes these old eyes have ever rested on, and fly around the world without stopping —except perhaps at Paris and the Lido. Do you care for goulash?"

He lighted a cigarette and grinned down at her.

"If you want money so badly, why don't you do as your father asks? Work at some business and make good, then you can fly to your heart's content."

"Excellent reasoning, my child, except that you haven't taken rheumatism and astigmatism into consideration. When I'm sixty, you probably wouldn't be able to coax me into a plane. Just now"—his voice was low, serious for the first time—"if I had all the money I wanted, I'd show the whole darned world! I'd make a flight record that would knock the rest of the birds into a cocked hat. Hey, hey—we're here, and it's dark in there, and you'd better come along home." He paused at the cemetery gate. "There'll be sunshine to-morrow."

"Yes—there'll be sunshine—"

THEY turned and started back. "There's a party to-night," he said between puffs of a fresh cigarette.

"Sonia's?" She tried to say it casually.

"Um-hm! Going?"

Rose shrugged. "Oh, I don't know—" carelessly, as if such affairs were unimportant in her life.

"Come along—why not?" he asked. "They'll play Puss in the Corner and tiddeley-winks, and toward midnight they'll serve indigestible food and turn on the victrola. Doesn't it tempt you? If things get too thick, we can figure out a few good ways of earning money. What do you say?"

She knew he was poking fun at her, good-natured fun. She laughed into his eyes happily. "Well—"

"Do you know," he went on easily, "you're the first girl in town who has been able to say a thing to me so far but, 'I think you're perfectly marvelous!' And you probably don't—and I'm not. *What* are you thinking, wistful-eyed elf?"

"I'm surprised. I thought all men loved being told they were marvelous."

"They do, if you must have the unvarnished truth. Even I, wastrel that

I am, welcome the honeyed words of flattery!"

She laughed at him—laughter winging down through her heart; clean, happy laughter. Oh, it was fun, talking like this! David—what would you say if you knew what I was thinking?

"You know," he went on, "I'd be interested to hear just how you felt when you discovered you were an heiress."

"They'll have to publish that in my memoirs," she told him. "Just yet, I don't know how I feel—nor how I felt."

"Did you buy the thing you'd wanted all your life?" he demanded. "And what was it—and has it made you happy?"

"I bought all the books that would fit in the house—"

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned. "I thought it would be a little red tricycle—or a diamond bracelet—"

"It's a little red coupé instead," she laughed.

"I see; her motor by Whosis, her frocks by Whatsis, her furs by— Say, suppose we have an evening going over the startling change in your fortunes. I'll be the big, brave reporter—and I'll get the long and short of it. Lord, what a relief it would be to chicken salad and the usual party! Name a day, will you?"

"What of your social program?" she asked with a twinkle in her eye.

He groaned. "Mercy, comrade—I'm the victim of contract bridge and incessant dancing and pretty little girls with big brown eyes and big blue eyes and—say, come along to this thing tonight, will you? If it gets too thick I'll take you home and we can finish the discussion then."

"I'm reading the most fascinating new book—" she told him.

"I'll look for you at Sonia's," he decided, "so you'd better come."

"Georgia is stopping by for me," she said carelessly. He *had* to think it didn't matter much—this thing that mattered so terribly. "But I don't think—"

"Aw, come on!" They were mounting the hill now. "You know, that's a neat little place you've got. Best setting in town. Can I pick some of your roses next summer?"

"I'll see—" She turned to leave him with a friendly smile.

"Well, better come," he said pleasantly enough. He wouldn't suffer if she failed to appear. His tone admitted that. He was being polite, probably.

But she went.

CHAPTER V

"YOU'RE too grand entirely!" Georgia told her as she stood at the foot of Rose's broad stairs, waiting. "Come on—come on! There's a mob in the car, and Cliff is furious at me because he found out I went to Leslie's party with Leo while he was away. Oh, Rose, that dress must have cost barrels!"

It had.

It had waited for this moment, hung sacredly between crisp sheets in a big cedar closet. It had been kissed and hugged and adored—waiting. And this was its moment. A frock of water-green velvet of enchantingly feminine lines, with a badger-trimmed jacket to give it the final touch.

Slowly Rose came down the stairs, thrilled to ecstasy, conscious that the costume framed her as nothing else could, conscious of the fact that David would see her soon. He must think the frock lovely. It might make her

more attractive in his eyes. He might want to dance with her, hold her in his arms. David—David—

As she reached the foot of the stairs, her spirits were soaring. The confidence her costume inspired in her gave her poise. She said to Georgia, "Are you sure you want me to go? I've never even met Sonia—nor any of the others who will be there."

"Here, put on your wrap and stop doing Hamlet in modern clothes! Come on, Rose. Inhibitions go overboard to-night. I've winged a man for you. He's visiting my brother. His name is Clive Hearth. We call him Cricket — for obvious reasons."

She giggled and slipped an arm through Rose's as Effie opened the door and let them out.

The Hoyt limousine was crowded with several uproarious companions of Georgia's. The noise subsided for a moment as Georgia opened the door.

"Listen, everybody!" she greeted them briskly. "Here's Rose Barker—make room, will you, Polly? Talk to each other, and the names will follow as the day the night. Oh, Cricket—Rose is your responsibility for the evening. Be nice to him, Rose. Hey, hey—Polly! Those buckles cost good American money—"

"Well, don't blame the buckles if you wear the longest shoes buyable!" came Polly's spirited answer. "Ouch—my toe—heavens, Georgia, you're a clown."

"Must you be perfectly comfortable every minute of your life?" inquired a disgruntled male on her left, wedged hopelessly into the corner. "Of course, it doesn't matter if there isn't a sleeve

Praying that she would meet no one, she made her way out

in this coat by the time we reach the darned party."

"They're engaged, Rose." Georgia leaned over with a confiding laugh. "Pardon the sentimental twaddle. They *will* make love in public."

They were Polly Duval and Julius Sayles. Rose had heard of them, seen them passing in smart cars. Stars that gleamed from afar.

"I hope you won't be mortally wounded during this delightful little ride," the man called Cricket said to her.

She met his pleasant gray eyes. The smile warmed her. "I think it's fun!" she said happily.

"You're a good sport," he told her. "Hey—Mark, easy on that left shoulder!"

Georgia said, "I had a man. I want my man—where is he?"

"He got out and walked. That's how he feels about you, sweetheart!" laughed Polly.

"I left my sugar sta-a-n-din' in the rain," sang Georgia in a wailing voice, "and my sugar—melted—a—way!"

"Go 'long, big girl," advised Julius. "Your sugar walked to the party with Edna St. John. He likes 'em pale and sad."

"Say it ain't true, Joe!" whimpered Georgia through gay laughter. "Say it ain't true!"

"Here we are!" announced Polly. "And let's all say a small, fervent prayer that Mrs. Pelletier hasn't forced her daughter to serve those terrible patés again. If I see one, I'll scream."

"Can I help you?" Cricket took Rose's hand as she stepped from the car. Their eyes met again. His said that he liked her. Hers were grateful for that assurance. "There was a dinner at Polly's house," he said. "We all came on from there. I wish you'd been there—"

"If that boy is making love to you, Rose," Georgia's shrill laughter cut in, "think nothing of it. We'll go on ahead, because Polly is sure to scream at something or other, and I hate to be identified with the infernal racket. I want you to meet Sonia—"

Sonia was receiving in the big library; Sonia, in brilliant red that suited her type so perfectly. She smiled with amusement at Georgia, kissed her cheek.

Georgia said, "This is Rose. Isn't it nice she could come?"

Sonia nodded, coolly, stretched out a languid hand. "So nice—but there aren't extra men, I warned you," she reminded Georgia.

"I've attended to that," Georgia assured her. "Cricket Hearth is here visiting Ed. He's Rose's man tonight."

"Oh!" Sonia nodded, smiled, shrugged a little. Then, to Georgia, "You know what Delia told us at lunch? Well, it's true! And, oh dear—I've got to talk to you before the evening's over. It's simply tragic. It all came out just as we feared—except—well, she didn't notice a soul, and—"

Little jabs of pain attacked Rose's smile. She was here because Georgia had contrived it. But she was an outsider. They had their world, their secrets, their gay young phrases, their laughter. You belonged or you didn't belong. She was an outsider.

If they thought of her at all, they said to themselves, "Oh—that's Rose Barker. She just came up from beyond the bridge—and that tumbledown shack. Her father left her money. Out of what? Out of pennies he had hoarded and scraped together selling old iron and junk. That's who she is—in her New York gown. Rose Barker."

No. They wouldn't discuss secrets with her or before her—or welcome her into their charmed circle. Did Rose Barker think her money could buy her a social standing here in Barrytown? That was what Sonia's manner conveyed.

"Come on, Rose, and meet some people," urged Georgia, suddenly remembering. "There's tons of 'em—"

There were. With music throbbing through the perfumed rooms of the big Pelletier house, people moved in groups, laughing, chatting. Rose was conscious of their scrutiny as she passed with Georgia, their hushed laughter.

If Georgia had led a circus animal through the rooms, it could not have attracted more curious attention than

herself. But this was the price she must pay for a little happiness. Some people get happiness free—or so it seemed. And some had to pay the top price. You couldn't strike bargains when your name was Rose Barker. David—

He would be here to-night. Would he notice her, after all? Or would he treat her with the frozen politeness that most of them affected?

"They're dancing, and here comes Cricket," said Georgia. "Be nice to him, Rose. He's a dear kid, and your type. Quiet and serious and trusting. He seems to like you."

Rose moved away on Cricket's arm to music that was more than music. It was melody in the dream that life had suddenly become.

He said to her, "You know, there's something awfully nice about you. I can't decide if it's your eyes or your smile—or both. You've got such a little-girl look."

She said, "This is my first party." And her voice trembled.

He laughed. "I'm supposed to believe that?"

"Then you don't know about me?" she asked him, wide-eyed.

"I just heard about you, and it's anyway twenty years too late!" he said boyishly. "I've been thinking most of the girls I knew were pretty — up to now!" His eyes were so fine and clean and eager.

"I never knew men said things like that in real life," she returned tremulously. "I thought it just happened in books."

"If we keep on quarreling like this," he said with a charming grin, "they'll call in the reserves."

And they laughed together like the two children they were. He laughed because he loved her a little even now, perhaps. And she laughed because her heart was singing, "David is coming! David is coming! He will smile at me—speak to me—dance with me, perhaps—"

Polly Duval and her partner came along during the short intermission, paused beside them. "That's a right good-looking outfit, Rose Barker. If you had an emerald choker to wear with it—" A shrug, intimated scorn —delicately intimated scorn.

"Why not lend her yours, darling?" put in her fiancé with a sarcastic smile.

"Because I wasn't sensible enough to become engaged to a man rich enough to buy me one!" she slammed back at him.

"What a shame!" he observed sympathetically. "And now when you've finished giving free advice to social climbers—" He stopped, colored, shrugged a little. "Well, come along, Polly. This seems to be dry territory."

"I believe I should have punched his nose," observed Cricket as they passed along. "Though I don't know exactly why. He couldn't have meant either of us."

"He meant me," Rose told him honestly.

"You're being funny!" snapped Cricket.

"I'm being honest. It's too bad. Apparently Georgia failed to give you my history. It wasn't fair to you since she paired us off for the evening."

"You're the loveliest thing I've ever seen!" He caught her hand with a warm clasp.

And as she turned to smile at him, her glance fell on a man who leisurely crossed the floor beyond. David.

In dinner clothes—a figure to catch the eye of any appreciative female; a figure that lorded it over every other

man present with its assurance and poise and ease. And her heart seemed to pause for that moment. She stood, a hand against her lips, aching with the shock of seeing him, with the mad pain of this moment.

Cricket smiled. "I didn't know things were serious between you—and that chap over there."

She caught herself sharply, smiled back at him. "Now *you're* being funny," she said, and moved along. He strolled along beside her. They reached Sonia again. She said to Cricket, "I want you to meet Tiny Simmons. She's hounded me ever since your arrival. Thinks she met you last year at the Yale game—"

"I'm booked for the evening," he informed her lightly, and slipped a hand through Rose's arm.

"Oh!" A very cool "Oh!" from Sonia. "I see—"

"These blooming women!" he stormed in Rose's ear. "And rude—Lord! For a hostess, that Pelletier person is about as gracious—"

"I told you before, I'm the thorn, you know."

They danced. No one cut in. They danced again. Cricket seemed delighted, but Rose suffered at their isolation. It grew conspicuous. Cricket laughed about it. Then Georgia approached with several men in her wake.

"These boys have been simply perishing to meet you, Rose!" she said boisterously. "This is Dick Severn—and Toddy Wayne—and Drake Lawlor—and the fat one here is Dwight Dennison. Settle it among you, boys, I'm absconding with Rose's man."

But Rose understood. Georgia had watched from the side-lines and realized how public opinion had shipwrecked Rose and Cricket.

The women were responsible. They were snobs. Georgia came to the rescue, used her charm to influence the men and solved the problem in her own way.

But Rose suffered. She had made a mistake. She shouldn't have come. What could have been the first great thrill of her life had dwindled to humiliation indescribable. And he—David— She had seen him dancing with Lola Waring; had seen them laughing together, arms about each other. Well, why not? Was it her right to question?

It was while she danced with Dwight Dennison that some unknown chap cut in. "Laura wants you—important—" She overheard that much. With an apology, Dennison escorted her to the room beyond and left. She understood. If Cricket would only appear, or Georgia—

A few people passed through the room where Rose sat. She waited what seemed a year—alone. And the crowning moment of humiliation came when she saw David and Lola stroll through, laughing gayly together. David nodded carelessly at Rose, smiled, and passed along with Lola.

She didn't matter—not for a moment. Had she dreamed she did? Had she dreamed herself important to him—or anyone? As if she, Rose Barker, could pierce the surface of his sophistication! That short hour tonight, as they had wandered along together indulging in trivialities, she had treasured, had cherished as being significant. And to him, it had been an amusing incident quickly forgotten.

Praying now that she would meet neither Cricket nor Georgia, she made her way blindly through the rooms, snatched up her wrap and left quietly, laughing to herself as she went down

the steps, laughing through heart-broken tears.

Through the snowy street she went, satin slippers stained and damp, crying softly—little-girl tears. What was this thing called love, laying its strong, brutal grasp on a poor, helpless human who had no weapons with which to meet it, no defense?

Her first party. The trailing ends of the lovely frock dragged through the snow. It didn't matter. There wasn't any use. Happiness had its favorites.

Effie admitted her, smiling in her quiet way, properly courteous and respectful; relieved Rose of her wrap and nodded toward the dimly lighted living room beyond. "There is a warm fire now, Miss Barker."

Rose walked through slowly, aimlessly, dropped to the couch before the flaming logs and leaned back wearily against the cushions. Dreaming of what might have been—of that other world where she had walked alone—of David—she was startled at the sound of the bell. It was late—

In a moment, David Marsh preceded Effie into the living room.

"You disappeared rather early, didn't you?" he demanded, grinning. "I thought we'd planned on a talk at Sonia's."

It was too preposterous! She must be dreaming.

"Mind if I sit down?" he asked carelessly. "The party got so thick, to tell the truth I was glad of some place to escape to." He glanced around the room curiously. "Neat little igloo you've got here— Mind if I smoke?"

"And what did you do with Lola?" she asked in an even voice when she could trust herself to speak.

"Transferred her momentarily to Cricket Hearth's arms. He's a snappy dancer, they say. By the way, wasn't he your man to-night?" He regarded her with an interested gaze.

"Not to-night, or ever. But he's pleasant, and I like him."

You could talk like this when your heart was up in your throat. You could—even though you wouldn't have believed it.

"Fair enough! Say—" suddenly, "why did you walk out on the party?"

"Because I finally faced the obvious fact that I didn't belong." It took a lot of courage to say that to David Marsh.

"That isn't true—"

"It is true," she insisted, with a quiet smile—but her throat ached, and her heart. "Quite true."

"You're getting morbid," he argued, and settled back again. "No woman wants to admit a thing like that—"

"I don't want to, but I have to."

"Oh—just because the line didn't form at the right, and there weren't several suicides to prove that you were knockin' 'em dead—"

"Let's talk about something else," she begged. You could carry on just so long—

"Going to cry?" He smiled amusedly. "Don't, for the Lord's sake!"

She laughed instead. Tremulously. "You weren't so brave to-day, yourself. Things weren't breaking for you—"

"That's right," he grumbled. "Throw it up to me."

"Well, give someone else a chance to be weak and human."

"No sense being weak—with a fortune dropping on your head overnight. Why, they were talking about it there to-night. I understand Newton bought up a lot of Whistler Motors

for you—and it's gone sky-high. You haven't a grief in the world if you're worth what the town has it figured at. Money can buy *anything*. Lord, if I had your chance, I'd buy what I wanted. You can get it if you go about it right. You've got to be patient, but in the end, you get what you want."

David — David! If you knew — if you knew! I would pour every last gold dollar into a shining heap and offer it to the god of chance for one smile of yours, one kiss, one sweet moment when you would say to me, "I love you!"

After a while she said, "You think you can buy what you want?" Leaning forward a little, her eyes commanded his with a strange directness.

"Sure. Why not?" He met her gaze frankly. "You never get what you want by sitting back crying over it. And as for being weak and human—Lord! That's the bunk." He got up and strolled restlessly about the room, paused beside the piano and dropped to the bench. "Do you play?"

"No."

He shrugged, ran his fingers over the keys. The chorus of a number they had heard to-night—he played it in college boy style, with all the trick variations and wailing minors deftly added. The fire, the snowy night outside, and they two shut in here in the cosiness and warmth; David singing in a low voice to himself— A picture she would cherish forever. Compensation for years of loneliness. Oh, David—David—

"You know," he said abruptly, getting to his feet, "you're an unusual kind of girl. Keeping your head—and all this luck breaking for you. I feel as if I'd witnessed Broadway's newest drama—except that I don't know the end. What do you suppose the end will be?" He stood close to her looking down with a twinkle in his eye.

"I wonder?" For a fleeting moment she smiled, then caught herself. The little thread that parted tears and laughter was so fine, so very fine!

"Well, I'm running along, if it's all the same to you," he decided. "I brought a girl to the party and I'd better take her home. It's being done in Barrytown. With this breathing spell, I think I can limp through the rest of it."

She wanted to reach out and hold him here—forever. She wanted to cry out to him, "David—oh, David, I am so hungry, so lonely—" But she only smiled and said, "Of course, of course—"

"I'll come again if you'll let me," It was casual and pleasant. He had reached the porch, with Rose close behind. He was glancing off at the stars as he spoke, restless, discontented.

"I'll always—let you—"

"Well, that's a help." He gestured casually, pulled the soft hat down over his eyes and drew the big collar of his raccoon coat close to his throat. "Well—so long."

She watched him down the street, standing there in the green velvet frock like a little lost spirit in the still winter night. "So—long—David!"

Under his amused smile Joan turned crimson as she clutched at the ends of her blouse

Bitter-Sweet

Every laugh, every bitter word this prince of Joan's uttered wounded her with a thousand knives, yet she was powerless to protect him from the hurt of another girl's cruelty

By Hagar Wilde

JOAN GAYNOR watched the progress of Lilith Banks from the outer door of the office. Lilith was heading for the door marked THOMAS GALT, PRIVATE.

Joan, small, efficient, black-haired and gray-eyed, loved Thomas Galt as she had never loved anything in all her empty young life. To Thomas Galt she was a machine.

She would have given five years of her life to receive from him the smile which would presently greet Lilith Banks. Lilith was his fiancée. It was really settled and done.

Joan bent over the scraggly marks on her notebook, which would emerge in due time into a neatly typed and coherent explanation to Weinstein, Weinstein and Weinstein of their fail-

ure to receive two dozen blankets ordered a month previous to the date of writing. She could scarcely see the scraggly marks. Her eyes were slightly blurred with the mist that rose over them each time she thought of Thomas Galt.

Weinstein, Weinstein & Weinstein,
349 E. Broadway,
Kaltoona, Ohio.

GENTLEMEN:

We regret to say that your account—

There. The door was open. Lilith Banks was extending a well manicured hand and Thomas was taking it. Thomas's long, brown hand—and his low, vibrant voice saying, "Lilith, you stun me anew each time I see you. How do you manage to look like an orchid at this time of day?"

How? Joan's mouth twitched into a bitter smile. Girls like Lilith managed to look like orchids because they spent the morning hours in bed breakfasting daintily from a black and silver enamel tray. She'd seen that tray. Once, she'd gone up there to help Lilith with her invitation list. After breakfast, Lilith had slipped into furred mules and made her way, humming, to a green tile bath. The water drawn for her bath became a clear translucent green and she stepped into that, letting her maid smear cold cream over her nose and chin the while.

Then a massage—expensive creams, of course. Then an astringent—then the sweetest, most expensive powders—fresh lingerie with dainty ribbons floating around and being tied in certain places—followed by a Chanel model or a Lanvin, or a Patou. Gloves, purse, fresh flowers for that lapel—how indeed did she manage to look like an orchid?

She managed to because she was one. An orchid carefully guarded, gently preserved from the harsh breezes which blew against delicate things and froze them.

Joan compared her day to Lilith's. The sharp clang of the alarm. Her drowsy awakening. The moment between blissful sleep and complete consciousness, when she wondered if there would ever come a time when she could place sixteen alarm clocks around her bed and throw them separately, with vim and vigor, from the nearest window when they went off in unison!

Complete consciousness. Scrambling out of bed and racing with the hands of the clock to slip into her shabby tweed suit which had lasted three years and was good—if she treated it carefully—for another.

Hastily bolted breakfast composed of a baked apple and soggy toast. Soggy with steam, not butter. Coffee which was more often than not lukewarm and nauseating.

A day of frantic industry during which she did everything from taking dictation and writing letters to searching through Mr. Galt's wastebasket for an important letter which he had absent-mindedly thrown away. During which her hair went haywire and looked like a haystack in charcoal—during which her nose became shiny and got shinier—during which she broke one nail after another on the typewriter keys and managed to accumulate dust spots on the backs of her hands and even on the tip of her nose.

Just a little dandelion, that's what she was—what she always would be.

LILITH'S gentle laugh trickled out and sent shivers down her spine.

She wondered if Lilith would laugh were she in her (Joan's) place.

She finished the letter to Weinstein,

Weinstein and Weinstein and started on a letter to Sam Sachs, who thought Galt & Co. were a bunch of robbers and liars and who, personally, would come up and lick the shirts off them if they did not send him a credit slip for five dollars and forty-nine cents.

The door opened. Lilith had finished her daily visit to her fiancé and was off for tea with some one who was amusing and danced well.

Joan stole a glance in their direction. Thomas was holding Lilith's hand and saying something in an undertone. Probably that he loved her to distraction. Joan's heart contracted. Why did she think of those things when they cost her so much heartache?

His bell. For her. She gathered her pad and pencil and went in to him. He was sitting there, long and lean and wonderful, and she forgave him all in that moment. He had blue eyes and he did not know that she loved him.

"Take a letter, Miss Gaynor," he said. "It's to Kalamazoo—do you know how to spell Kalamazoo?"

"Yes," she said in an undertone.

"Good," he said, "I don't. Hauser Rosen is the name. Funny name. Tell him we shipped his darn blankets last week. He's somewhere on South Street. Look the number up in the files—"

She started out. He said, "Wait a minute."

She waited. "Why," said Thomas Galt, "do you wear your shirtwaist on the outside of your skirt?"

She clutched at the back of her blouse. It had worked out and was hanging there in a passable imitation of a Chinese laundryman's shirt. She went crimson and jammed it inside saying, "I—I didn't know—"

"I just wondered," Thomas Galt said, with an amused smile. "It looked funny."

"Yes, sir," Joan said. "I suppose it did."

"It did," Thomas said, and settled that.

There it was. Things worked out and looked funny. She looked funny. She *was* funny. She was a funny little machine that wrote letters and let her blouse go hang, and her hair go hang, and her nose—and her mind.

She went into the ladies' room and cried about it for a while.

THAT night she thought about it. She devoted three solid hours of thought to it. Afterward she found that she had an idea clutched solidly between her small, white teeth. She had to have money!

If she had money, things would be settled. But how to get it?

She had three hundred dollars in the savings bank. It had been scrimped out of her meager salary three and four dollars at a time. Lilith Banks paid that much for a frock in one fell swoop.

That three hundred dollars had to get her more. Somehow it had to multiply itself. She caught up the evening paper and studied the financial page. She would be either an orchid or a completely trampled dandelion.

Elton Copper. Thirty dollars a share. That would mean that she could buy fifty shares of Elton Copper on margin—her brain reeled.

The next day she bought Elton Copper on margin.

The following day it went up a point. Her profits were on paper, but she had profits. Two days later it took a two-point jump.

That day when Lilith came in to see Thomas, Joan met her face to face. She'd just taken a letter from him. Lilith stared at her, noticing her for

the first time. There was a different look on Joan's face. Her eyes were wide and sure of something. Lilith didn't know what they were sure of, but they'd taken a pretty firm stand on some ground. A puzzled little frown knit Lilith's brow as she entered the private office.

"Tom," she said, "that little office girl—the one with the arching eyebrows, you know—all eyes—something's happened to her."

"Yes?" Tom said. "And now what have you been doing, my dear?"

"No, don't put me off, Tom. What's happened to her?"

"Maybe she's in love."

"SHE'S too pretty, really, to have in an office," Lilith said.

"Is she?" asked Thomas.

"Of course she is. Much too pretty. Hadn't you noticed?"

"No," Tom said.

"That must have been a blow," said Lilith.

"Must we talk of my employees? Haven't we more important things to discuss?"

"Of course. We have mother's reception and the Hollis's dinner party to-morrow night and—"

"I mean," Thomas said gently, "can't we discuss *us?*"

"What about us?"

"Oh, I don't know. Frankly, Lilith, I'm getting restless. You say you love me. You protest that I mean more to you than anything else and yet—somehow—you don't give me any evidence of it. You go around with Frank, and you have tea with Brand two days out of seven—and there are evenings which are extremely important to me when you find at the last moment that you'd rather accept Jim Taylor's bid to a dance at the Crowell Club than to spend them with me. What does that mean?"

"It means that I'm a product of the new civilization, I suppose," Lilith said. She looked at him shrewdly. Tommy was a good catch. There wasn't any doubt of that. He had money—he had social position—but actually, if she had her way—Brand was the man she preferred being with. She wondered—at least it flashed through her mind—why didn't she marry Brand? Because he hadn't money, of course. She'd thrashed that all out with herself long ago.

Brand and poverty. Tommy and Paris frocks, a Newport house, a villa in Southern France. She wanted these things. She had to have these things. Tommy was the high road to the land of her gilt dreams. She allowed her eyes to soften—made them soften—put her hand over Tommy's and said in her crooning voice, "Tommy—you don't trust me."

"*Trust* you!" he cried, whirling suddenly. "I never thought of mistrusting you, Lilith! It's only that I don't trust this restless age we live in. Somehow I always dreamed of the one woman waiting for me. You know what I mean—hanging on my words. That sort of thing. Old fashioned. Just the sort of man who winds up with a girl like you. Funny, isn't it?"

"I don't think it's funny," Lilith said. Her tone had hardened again. Was Tommy getting out of her grasp?

She'd have to rectify that. She'd have to cinch it in the only way it could be cinched. He'd have to know that he couldn't be sure of her—that she was a prize to fight for. She gathered her gloves and tucked a wisp of blond hair back under her close fitting hat. Brand would be waiting. They were having tea at the Biltmore.

"Well," she said, "I'll be running along, darling. Be a good boy. See you to-morrow."

"Not to-night?" Tommy asked wistfully.

"Had you forgotten Mildred's theater party? I told you I was going."

"No," Tommy said almost inaudibly, "you didn't. I guess *you* forgot."

"Umm—well, maybe. Things have been happening at such a rate that I haven't been able to notice them as they whirled past."

"Oh!"

She went out.

TOMMY went over and stood at the window for a long time. He scarcely heard the door open and yet knew that it had opened and that some one was standing there.

He turned. Joan had a sheaf of letters in her hand. "You wanted to sign these," she said, laying them on his desk.

"Oh, yes," said Tommy. He noticed her for the first time since she had been working for him. Trim little legs coming from beneath a slim suit skirt. Lovely hands—nails neglected a bit. Beautiful hair in spite of the fact that it flew wildly in every direction.

"Look here," he announced firmly, "I want to know something from a woman. I want to hear something. You're a woman. Maybe you can tell me."

"Yes, sir."

"If you were in love," Tommy said slowly, watching her, "how would you feel about the man you loved? Would you want to be with him every possible moment or wouldn't it matter to you? Would you want to please him every way you could or wouldn't that matter either!"

Joan thought her knees would go out from under her. She wondered if he could see her quaking. Tommy Galt talking to her of love. The word passing his lips in her presence. It was unbelievable. She found her voice. It trembled, but it was there.

"I would," she said, "wait for him until I fell apart. I would try to please him in every possible way. Was that what you wanted to know?"

"Thank you," Tommy said, "that was what I wanted to know."

She started out. He said, as she reached the door, "Wait a moment."

Instinctively, Joan reached for the back of her blouse. It was in. Tommy wasn't talking to her actually. He was talking to himself, but he wanted her to answer him. "And what," he asked, "would you think of a woman who was not willing to do these things?"

Slowly now. Carefully. "I would," Joan said, "think that perhaps she did not love him—much."

"I see," said Tommy. "Thank you very much."

Joan went outside and trembled for half an hour.

LILITH was staring at Brand Sinclair across the tea table. Brand, with that trick smile of his. Brand, with that certain way of holding her when they danced. Brand, who had all the ingratiating little mannerisms handed down through generations of society men. "Brand," she said suddenly, "I'm in danger of losing Tommy. What shall I do?"

"It's your game, my dear," he answered. "Not mine, you know. I'm an onlooker. Penniless. Maybe you'd better give me up. Maybe you'd better turn dutiful and clinging viney."

"I'm not dutiful," she said, "and I don't cling worth a darn."

"Is that my hard luck?"

"Brand—you don't care a hoot for me."

"Of course I do," he said. "You're charming and useless. It's what I've been brought up to worship." For a moment there was a bitter twist to his lips. "You see, Lilith," he said, "we—men like me, I mean—have lost our sense of values. The girl who would die for us goes unnoticed. We get all wrought up over useless creatures like you—we think you're the lady fair we are glad to greet bloody noses and such for. It's rather silly when you look at it with the rose colored glasses off."

"Brand—I love you."

"Yes," he said. "It takes your sort to say things like that. Lilith, you couldn't love anybody. Not really. You love yourself. It's unfortunate, but it'll get you more than anything else would in this funny world."

"You don't seem to realize what I've just said."

"I realize it only too well, my dear. You said you love me and you lied."

"Lied!" she cried. "Lied, Brand?"

"Lied," Brand said firmly. "You've perjured your soul to eternal damnation for the thrill of seeing a certain light in my eyes. Lilith, you're a fool. You'd better reform and stick to Tommy. I've nothing to offer you. I couldn't buy your stockings for a year—let alone your frocks. Be reasonable. We'd be fighting like cats and dogs at the end of a month living on my pittance."

"I told you I loved you," she said sharply. "I didn't ask you to marry me."

"Pardon," he murmured, "in my father's day love meant marriage. Perhaps the customs have changed. Perhaps love is one thing nowadays and marriage another. Is that it?"

"You're being beastly to me. Beastly."

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "I'm beginning to feel sorry for us."

"Us?"

"Men," he said. "We're fools, you know. We believe in soft little things like you. If we have the money—as I haven't, of course—we shower you with furs to keep your exquisite little throats warm—we give you pearls for your throat and diamonds for your fingers and we look at you from a distance as we'd look at a white princess clothed in cloth of gold. Take Tommy. He's slaving in that filthy blanket office piling up a fortune to marry you—to marry what, that's what I want to know. A shell? A woman who can sit across the tea table from another man, engaged to Thomas Galt, and say 'Brand, I love you.' That's what he's going to marry. He's giving everything. You're giving nothing. You can't be blamed. You were brought up to it. Your mother trained you in the arts. The art of being something you aren't—the art of living a lie—the modern social arts. Lilith, I am sick of it. I am sick of watching it, and my heart bleeds for your Tommy. That nice chap, being cheated. Cheated by a cheat who hasn't the grace to realize that she is shoddy and unworthy—"

Lilith had gone white. She took her gloves from the table and slipped them on slowly. Her face was working with an emotion which was not pretty. "I never hated anybody," she said deliberately, "as much as I hate you at this moment. I never shall. I have never wanted to kill anybody before. Never. I do now."

"The first genuine emotion you have ever had," Brand said, "and all brought on by the truth. Strange."

"I shall never see you again," Lilith

said, "and if I do, spare yourself the bother of recognizing me."

Brand bowed with an expression of gentle regret.

Lilith hurried from the room, leaving him standing at the table staring after her. Once home, she collapsed in a heap of shuddering agony and wrung herself dry of tears.

Thereafter, Tommy was amazed at her subdued devotion. She called him at the office the first thing in the morning. She dropped in on him in the afternoon. She had no more tea engagements with Brand. She saw him every evening, which released him from the pressure of business and its wearying details.

JOAN'S profits in Elton Copper were steadily mounting. She opened a charge account at one of the leading shops. At the end of the month, she intended selling Elton to meet the bills for frocks which she had bought.

She was in debt one thousand dollars for frocks.

There was the little blue velvet afternoon frock with its cascade of lace which went whispering down around her wrists and had cost what to her was a small fortune. The green satin evening gown narrowly bound by cerise, touching the floor in back, curling up around her knees in front, outlining her slender figure as a green sheath outlines a white blossom just before it opens. The wrap went with it, soft satin of the same material lined in eggshell satin. It caressed her arms lovingly. Others, slim and lovely, of unbelievably luxurious materials.

Nights she spent in rapt adoration of them, trying them on over and over again—would she ever have a chance to wear them? Would her secret dreams ever become reality?

Then one day Elton Copper fell off a point. Panic struck her. What if—She dared not think about it. The next day it regained the point and her heart went back to its normal, steady pulsation.

It was that day that Thomas Galt sent word to her that she would remain after hours to take dictation. Things were piling up at the office. He called Lilith at five to tell her that he must break his dinner date with her.

The office closed. Joan sat there at her desk, her mind whirling. She would be, in another moment, alone with Thomas Galt. She would be sitting beside him making marks with her pencil and outside, the office would be dark and still. He might ask her again how women loved. How they felt in love. Would she be able to resist the impulse to throw herself at his feet and tell him truly?

His door opened. He stood silhouetted against the brilliant patch of light which came from the open door. "Miss Gaynor," he said, and went back in the office.

SHE went in to him. He was standing at the window looking at the lights of the street. He said first, "They're unreal to me. Like everything else. Unreality. Surrounded by it. Do you feel it too, Miss Gaynor?"

"No, sir," Joan said.

He turned to look at her. "It's because you are real," he said. "You lead a real life. You think real things. You are happy, I suppose."

"No, sir," Joan said, low-voiced.

"Why not? You have everything. I suppose there is a young man?"

Joan hesitated, looked at him for a moment. "Yes, sir," she said in a strange tone, "there is."

"Then why are you not happy?"

"I am not happy," Joan said, "because I love him and he doesn't know—I exist."

"That's it," he said, and again he was talking to himself. "We pass by the real things and take the unreal. We're funny, we men. Well, let's get to the dictation."

He sat down. All through it he stared at her. He seemed to be trying to figure something out while he spoke of blankets and unanswered letters.

When it was finished, he leaned forward and looked straight at her.

"I want to hear about you and your life," he said. "I want to know what you do with your evenings—what you think and feel—will you come out with me and have dinner? We'll come back later and finish with that bunch of letters in the basket. I haven't had time to look them over yet. How about it? Does it frighten you to have your employer make dinner advances to you?"

"No, sir," Joan said, with a steady look.

He slapped the arm of his chair. "I knew it wouldn't," he said gleefully. "You're solid, somehow. Real and solid. Get your things."

She was not trembling now. She felt cold all over. An iciness that settled down to the soles of her feet. She was thankful for the impulse which had led her to wear the new coat that morning. Snug black felt hat that brought out the startling white of her skin, slim-fitting black coat with a fur collar arching high in back and slanting off just below her chin, black gloves. Ready for dinner with Thomas Galt.

He came out of his office and closed the door behind him. Stared. "Jove," he said, "you're different. Quite different. Fur becomes you. You look festive. We'll go somewhere where we can dance. Would you like to dance? You're probably a zephyr in disguise—I'm rather clumsy on the dance floor. If you don't mind that—"

"I'd love to dance with you," Joan said.

"Fine." He took her arm and helped her over the small step in the elevator and they shot downward.

THE Peacock Inn was new to Joan. The lights were soft. The music was heavenly. The floors were so thickly carpeted that one could not hear one's own footfalls. Thomas watched her closely. The shine in her eyes. He said, "You don't try to hide it, do you?"

"Hide what?"

"The thrill of it. It gets into you and you let it. In fact, you welcome it."

"Yes," she said. "Doesn't every one?"

He shook his head. "My dear young lady," he said gravely, "you've no idea how we all go around hiding our emotions. It's not considered fashionable to let them appear."

"I'm not a fashionable girl," Joan said with a slight smile. "I work for a living."

"Umm," he said, and bent over the menu.

One dance with him after their tomato juice cocktail. His strong arm guiding her, slipping her triumphantly between two other couples and then the feeling of floating gloriously in the empty space gained.

Their soup was before them and Thomas had just said, "Tell me about yourself," when Joan's hand clutched the tablecloth and her eyes riveted upon the door.

He asked, "What is it?"

Lilith was standing on the steps that led downward to the level of the tables and she was staring at them. Her eyes changed from ice to fire and she started walking slowly in the direction of their table. The young man who was her escort simply stood where he was and watched her go.

"It's—it's Miss Banks," Joan said.

Lilith was there by that time. "Yes," she said, "it's Miss Banks. Miss Banks in person. If I remember right, Thomas, I had a telephone call from you saying that you were detained at the office and would be unable to dine with me."

"You remember correctly," Thomas said.

"Was—this—" she looked at Joan, and yet through her, "the business?"

"Part of it," Thomas said. "Miss Gaynor helped me with my letters."

Lilith's scornful snicker reached several other tables.

"One always dines with one's stenographer after the dictation is finished, I suppose?"

"I don't know the rules," Thomas said coldly. "I really couldn't say. I can say this, however—that I resent a scene in a public place. You are making it extremely difficult for Miss Gaynor."

Lilith whirled upon Joan. "You wretched little beggar—"

Lilith whirled and concentrated upon Joan. "So you're Miss Gaynor now?" she snapped. "He hadn't noticed you—no, of course not. It would have spoiled your pleasant little evenings together if he had told me he'd noticed you—spoiled the fun of sneaking out and having dinner with you when he was supposed to be working at the office—putting me off because of it! Too

bad you have to be caused a scene, *Miss Gaynor,* but don't you find that gold diggers are used to scenes? As woman to woman—leaving Tommy out of it—couldn't you say that they're used to scenes? I'd love to know all about you and your sort. An interesting study, I imagine. Was Tommy studying you, do you think?"

JOAN stood up now. She still held her napkin. Her face was whiter than it ever had been before. Her lips were bloodless. "I think you've said quite enough," she said slowly. "You may believe it or not, as you please, but this is the first time Mr. Galt has ever invited me for dinner. He was very kind to think of it. The—the mistake was mine for accepting him. I hope you will pardon it."

With the advantage, Lilith was merciless. "He has you trained, hasn't he? Did you study a formula 'What to Say When Miss Banks Appears?' You wretched little beggar—"

Tommy's voice rang out above hers. "*Lilith!* How dare you?"

"How dare I?" she screamed. "How dare *I?* How dare you take it for granted that you may come to me when you leave her? First a stenographer and then Lilith Banks. You fool!" She tore his ring from her finger and threw it on the table. "From now on," she said mockingly, "you won't be put to the trouble of lying about your dinner dates. Won't it be fun to know that you can take her out in company and it doesn't matter if you see some of my friends?"

Joan felt every eye in the restaurant upon her. At the next table, a young man with a sharp nose reached for a pencil and notebook in his inside coat pocket. "That's young Galt," he said in an undertone. "The girl is Lilith Banks, I think. I wonder who the honey in the black coat is? Take care of my check, will you? There's a story here."

He followed them from the restaurant. Tommy had left Lilith's ring upon the table where she had thrown it. Curious eyes trailed them.

OUTSIDE in the air, Tommy drew a deep breath. He seemed stunned. Without a word he took her arm and put her in a taxi. They jammed out into traffic.

Joan stared straight ahead of her. She felt as though her face had been smeared with a tar brush. Tommy said, "I'm sorry, Miss Gaynor. Most awfully sorry. I can't tell you how badly I feel about the whole thing. We'll stop at some quiet place and have our dinner. We won't work any more to-night."

Joan said, "It's my fault. I shouldn't have come with you."

"You were a brick to stick through it," he said.

She simply turned and looked at him. He took her hand. "You *are* solid," he said. "I feel as though I could hang onto you in a storm. Funny, isn't it?" The whole world seemed funny to Tommy. A funny, whirling mass of Liliths and girls like her.

Joan let him hold her hand. She said, "Listen, Mr. Galt—I've an apartment. It's small and awfully shabby—there's a kitchenette, though. If you'd like it, I could cook a little dinner and we'd be away from—" She paused.

"Those eyes," he said. "How did you know I felt that I couldn't stand having another person look at me to-night?"

"Because I felt that way," she said, with a little smile.

"Tell me your address and I'll give it to the driver."

The hall was dingy and the bulb on Joan's landing had burned out. She had to fumble for the keyhole. She dreaded the moment when the light would flood the living room and show him what she lived in. The holes in the carpet. The stains on the table, the soiled silk of the curtains, all of it.

He did not seem to notice the holes in the carpet. He threw his coat across the back of a chair and chucked his hat on top of it, went to the window and looked out. "For the first time in years," Thomas Galt said over his shoulder without turning, "I feel solid, like you. Those lights out there are real to me now."

And the sharp-nosed young man who was leaning against a lamp-post downstairs jotted down a number and a name. Joan Gaynor was the only feminine name on the bell list. He had heard enough of the conversation in the restaurant to know that she was Thomas Galt's stenographer. He ambled away whistling.

A moment later, Joan scurried out of the door and ran to the corner market to purchase steak and Brussels sprouts.

THAT evening, Joan tasted a thick slice of heaven. There was a hole in the tablecloth and she put the platter of steak over it. Thomas Galt ate his steak and Brussels sprouts and talked continuously, trying to straighten things out in his own mind. "She thinks she loves me," he said. "I mean Lilith. She's said so over and over—but I've never felt that it was more than words. I thought perhaps it was her training. Keeping a man on tiptoe—keeping him guessing. Always that little hint of doubt in her voice. Do you know what I mean, Joan?"

"Yes," Joan said. She had scarcely eaten anything. Her feast sat across the table from her in a rickety chair.

"Look," he said. "This is one of the things I wanted to ask you. Have you ever said 'I love you,' to a man? Don't answer me if you'd rather not."

"I'd like to," Joan said. "I haven't. Ever."

"I knew the answer, too," he said, "before I asked the question. Your eyes show it. Funny how eyes show things said and unsaid, isn't it?"

Joan wondered idly if it would be amusing to keep track of the number of times that Thomas Galt commented upon the strange ways of the world. "Funny world, isn't it? Funny things in it. Funny thoughts." She simply nodded in answer to his question.

He stayed late and talked his heart out to her. She was calm and happy. To-morrow was another day. To-night he was here, with her, and feeling the solidity he'd missed in human relationships.

When he left he kissed her hand as though she were a princess. "Good night, Joan," he said, standing in the dim light of the hall. "You've helped me tremendously just letting me talk. I needed it. To-morrow, eh? To-morrow I'm going to make you talk about yourself and that fool young man who doesn't know you exist. Imagine a man being able to ignore your existence! *Funny.*"

"I think," she said, leaning against the door jamb and tilting her head slightly, "that he's beginning to know I exist."

"Really?" Thomas Galt said. His voice was politely pleased, but his eyes went under a cloud.

She listened intently to his footsteps

on the second landing, the first, and half way down to the ground floor. By straining her ears she caught the sound of the door closing behind him. She shut her own door softly and leaned there twirling the doorknob this way and then that.

Suddenly she put her lips against one of the door panels and kissed it. Then she laughed a little. "You think it's funny, me kissing you like that," she said to the door, "but I'm really kissing him. Not that I've a right to—"

Before she went to sleep, she cried. She wasn't crying from unhappiness nor yet from happiness. The pent up emotion within her had to find some outlet. She fell asleep with the pillow damp beneath her cheek. To-morrow was another day—

AND to-morrow was the day that confronted her with Tommy's picture in the newspapers, Lilith's picture opposite it, and her name in a prominent position in the story which followed beneath it.

She read it at the breakfast table, and the world sank from beneath her feet and pitched her into a fog. Where did this leave her? In the fog. That was the answer.

She went to the office. The door marked Thomas Galt, Private, stared her in the face as she stepped from the elevator. Thomas Galt, Private. Very private. Private in his wealth. The words of the newspaper story kept running through her head.

> The engagement of Thomas Galt, wealthy young Park Avenue man about town, to Lilith Banks, daughter of Frayne Banks, was broken in a spectacular manner last night. Mr. Galt was dining with his stenographer, Miss Joan Gaynor, when Miss Banks, by an unhappy circumstance, chose to dine at the same restaurant and objected publicly and vehemently to Mr. Galt's company.

Publicly and vehemently to Mr. Galt's company—

Tommy was not down yet. The eyes of the girls who worked with her dwelt upon her with speculation. Strange little mouse who had worked with them for months and who suddenly skyrocketed into the horizon with the surprise of surprises. When they had thought all along that Thomas Galt was madly in love with Lilith Banks.

She hated them because their eyes held new respect for her. Strange little mouse who wasn't, after all, so unimportant. She hated them for thinking that there had been cheap, clandestine suppers with her employer after hours—that it had been a regular thing with they two—perhaps even that he had kissed her.

Her face burned with shame.

She dreaded the moment that he would appear and his buzzer would sound, summoning her in there to talk about it. Their eyes would follow her. Their minds would do tricks and they would look at each other and smile. She tried to concentrate upon her notebook and found that she had inserted PUBLICLY AND VEHEMENTLY in a letter, in caps.

She stopped trying to work. It was impossible. She would wait until he came and it was over.

She would leave, of course, immediately thereafter.

She picked up the morning paper and, keeping her eyes steadfastly from the news section where Thomas Galt stared out in all his splendor, she turned to the financial page. Elton Copper had climbed two points farther. She

tried to figure her profits, but coherent thought was impossible. She gave it up, folded her hands and waited.

HE came at eleven. His eyes searched her out immediately he passed through the elevator door. He came directly to her. She was glad that he had done that. He leaned over and stared down into her eyes. "Yes," he said. "I knew you'd seen it. What a rotten mess. Will you come in the office, Joan?"

"Yes, Mr. Galt," she said.

She went in after a moment without her pad and pencil. No use pretending that she was being called in for dictation when the others knew she wasn't.

He was sitting at his desk, long and lean and weary. Perfectly tailored. His blue eyes had something new in them. Something she had not seen there before.

He stared at her. "Joan," he said abruptly, "do you think the young man will become sufficiently aware of you within the next fifty years to make it worth while?"

"What do you mean?"

"I'm proposing to you," he said. "Asking you to marry me. Will you, Joan?"

Her mouth twitched into a smile. "I expected that you would be cut up over it," she said, "but not that badly, Mr. Galt. Thank you, no."

"Look here," he said. "I know you well enough to know that you won't stay here after this—this rotten thing. Do you know what it means to try and get a job with that hanging over you? I can tell you. It means failure. It will take six months for that to die out—for them to forget your name. They'll think I threw you out, giving you a reference to salve my conscience. They'd be polite to you, but they'd never call. Never. I know."

"So you'd marry me and make it worse," she said. "You'd have them think that—that you salved your conscience with a chivalrous proposal of marriage instead of a reference."

"You think that too, don't you?"

"What would you expect them to think?"

"I'd expect them to think that I loved you," he said. He got out of his chair in one swift movement and caught her in his arms. He kissed her once and released her. "And I do," he said huskily. "Funny, isn't it?"

Joan gasped and began to laugh. She laughed until her eyes burned and were filled with tears.

He said stiffly: "What are you laughing at?"

"The whole thing," she choked. "Funny? *Funny?* It's uproariously funny."

"I can understand your refusal to marry a man you don't love," he said slowly, "but I can't understand your laughter. I really can't. One thing more, Joan, before you go out. I won't—won't tickle your strange sense of humor again by asking you to marry me—but I want to know before you leave here that you will be safe. Promise me you won't leave before you've talked to me and I've agreed. Try to stand their eyes out there and stick, will you?"

"Yes," she said. "I won't leave without letting you know."

"Thank you." His eyes followed her as she went out. When the door closed behind her he went over to the window and jerked at the curtain string. He said bitterly, "Uproariously funny. I fall in love and it's uproariously funny. By gosh, it *is*. Quite funny. I could almost laugh at

nyself. A girl like her tied to a—chump like me. Very funny indeed."

HE had kissed her. His kiss was still on her lips. She could feel it there. She would have that, nyway. He had kissed her because e considered it his duty—just as he onsidered it expedient to tell her that e loved her—but he *had* kissed her. No matter where she went or what appened to her, she would always ave that kiss. Lilith Banks couldn't ake it away from her—the newspaper ouldn't—nobody, nothing in the world ould take that away from her.

She sat, prim and straight, at her esk typing a letter. It was a per-onal letter, an important letter. It as a letter to Tommy to be left on er desk after lunch time. She would alk out at lunch time, relieve him of ne responsibility of her and then she ould start thinking about the future. Jow she dared not. The letter read:

DEAR TOMMY:

I can call you that now, because I know I will never see you again. I told you I would not go without letting you know. I am letting you know now. I am not coming back.

This is a very important letter, because it will straighten something out in your mind. When you kissed me and I laughed, I laughed because since the first time I saw you I had dreamed that some day, somehow, for some reason, you might look at me and know I was there. That was all I wanted. Just for you to look at me and smile. And then to feel your arms around me and to hear you saying what you said—because of last night, I know, but saying it nevertheless—was like sitting on top of a safe rock and suddenly having some one stick a charge of dynamite under it and touch it off.

There isn't any young man but you. There never has been. It's been you all along. You were the one who didn't know of my existence. You were the one who looked through me and dictated at me. And all the time I was thinking, "Maybe some day he will look in my direction and know that I am there."

Try and imagine, if you can, how it hurt to be proposed to and kissed by the man you love because he felt it to be his duty.

I'm not blaming you. I'm still loving you, and you can't blame a person for things he's not responsible for, can you? After all, you aren't responsible for the fact that I was born to be a stenographer, nor for the fact that of all the men in the world I had to fall in love with you.

It will be useless to try and find me at my apartment. I am moving directly I leave here. JOAN.

And she did. Bag and baggage, to the last pair of hose. Her clothes, pictures, book ends, shoes, hats and books were crammed in glorious confusion into three bags, and she found herself in a taxi (a horrible, but necessary extravagance) bound for nowhere in particular.

BACK at the office, Tommy was staring at her letter. A fixed, glassy stare. A stony, despairing stare. Joan, the one solid thing in his life, so recently found, had left him whirling in a funny restless world once more.

Her letter was lying open on his desk when the door opened and Lilith came in. She was the orchid once more. Gentle and fragrant. Guarded. Sheltered. Impeccably attired. Faultlessly shod and gloved. She moved toward him, her lips trembling a little.

Lilith had thought things over. She had remembered that Tommy was a successful young man, that he was, after all, a business man, and that business men were expected to take their stenographers out for dinner—at least,

that they did in the stories she'd read. Those little suppers didn't touch her rights as the daughter of Frayne Banks.

Tommy was looking at her strangely Probably he was cut up over the breaking of their engagement.

She said, "Tommy—I'm sorry about the scene last night."

"Are you?" he said.

It was going to be harder than she had expected. She let her chin quiver a little more. Nicely. The tears came to her eyes. She was accustomed to crying for what she wanted. "Tommy," she said, "I was awfully hurt. I was nearly crazy."

"You were crazy," Tommy said.

"I'm willing to forgive and forget it," she said.

"Forgive what?" said Tommy, "and if there's anything to forget, I guess I'll be the one who'll do the forgetting. I'll be busy forgetting something for a good long while."

"I went and got my ring," she said, and leaned forward to show it to him glittering on the third finger of her left hand. Tommy stared at it and smiled. "It's a nice ring," he said, "but you're wearing it on the wrong finger."

"You mean—" Lilith faltered.

"Yes," he said, "that's what I mean."

The orchid suddenly became a bit of rag weed. She quivered with fury. "You're in love with her," she said. It was an accusation, not a statement.

"And if I am?" Tommy said.

"If you are," she said spitefully, "I suppose you'll marry her and try to force her into our set. Well, it won't work."

"You know," Tommy said coldly, "I doubt if she would accept your set. Personally, I think she's too good for you—all of you. I might set your mind at rest, though. She's gone."

"Gone? What do you mean?"

"Disappeared," Tommy said stonily. "Vanished. Melted into thin air. *Left* me just as I discovered that she's the only woman in the world."

"Oh, she'll be back," Lilith shrilled. "A good dramatic gesture. No second-rate woman could resist that. She'll come back and say she couldn't stand it—that separation was too much for her—that her life is in your hands. That sort of thing. She's probably seen it in the movies."

She could almost hear Tommy's teeth grinding. He said, "Get out of here."

Lilith got out. She called Brand from the lobby of the building. "Brand," she said softly. "I'm not angry any more. Can't we have tea at the Biltmore this afternoon?"

Brand said, "If you like."

"One thing," she said, "before I see you, darling. I've broken my engagement to Tommy. I decided that love was the most important thing in life after all. I couldn't stand being separated from you, dearest."

JOAN sat in a miserable hall bedroom and looked around her. Spotty wall paper—hideous drapes. Cheap, dirty curtains. She had to unpack, but she started to cry first. Her hands clenched and unclenched upon the bedspread which had a large hole almost in the center of it. She could smell frying onions from the floor below. Tommy—Tommy—

She unpacked slowly and carefully, folded every pair of stockings as though it were tremendously important that they be folded just so, stopped to pull ribbons through lingerie which she had discarded weeks before. Her mind

seemed numb and cold. What was she going to do? *What was she going to do?* She did not know which way to turn, and she owed a thousand dollars.

She called her broker about Elton Copper. "I want to sell," she said. "I want to get out immediately."

"Why?" he said. "That stock's going ten points higher. I've investigated it. I know."

"I've no money," Joan said thinly, "and I need it badly."

"Can't you hang on just a little longer?"

Ten points. A ten point rise meant fifteen thousand dollars. A loss meant that she would be penniless, and still owing a thousand for frocks. Without a job. If Elton did take a ten point rise, she need worry no longer. It was a long gamble, but she took it. "Hang on, then," she said, "but the moment it drops, sell me out."

"I'll keep in touch with you."

She hung up. Her mind went whirling with figures. She had exactly fifteen dollars. She ran upstairs to her room and dressed hurriedly. She would start looking for a job.

Business men who had advertised for a secretary had their present secretaries (who were getting married and leaving the business world) interviewing the applicants. Joan found the harshness of women in dealing with other women that week.

Eyes like gimlets when she gave her name. One of them even said coldly, "Oh, yes, you were connected with Thomas Galt & Co., weren't you?"

"Yes."

"Why did you leave?"

"For personal reasons," Joan said, staring straight at her.

"I see. Well, if you'll leave your name and address here on the file, I'll call you when we've decided."

"Thank you," Joan said, and once outside, she smiled grimly.

She could still see Tommy sitting there saying, "But they'll never call. I *know*."

None of them called. Her fifteen dollars was gone in spite of the pitiful scrimping she had done. She owed a week's room rent. She had grown thinner during that two weeks. Her skin was even whiter than before—almost transparent—and there were soft hollows in her cheeks. Her eyes were dull from undernourishment.

Elton Copper was climbing slowly. A half point—three-quarters—a point—two—fifteen thousand dollars if she could hang on for a ten-point rise. Then steaks and a place to sleep where the mattress was not lumpy and uncomfortable.

Then one morning she caught a glimpse of the headlines.

"Market Breaks, Panic In Wall St."

SHE left her room and rushed for a telephone. She had her broker's office on the wire after a wait of five minutes, due to every cord on the office switchboard being busy. She asked for him. He was down on the street. No, they did not know where she could get in touch with him. She asked wildly about Elton Copper. "Off five points," they said laconically.

Her profits—she said, "I have fifty shares. Sell them."

"At what price?"

"Anything—anything at all."

"It's shooting down every minute, miss. You'd better get down here with security and hang on. This break can't last."

"I haven't any security. You'll have to sell."

"Okay."

She walked all the way to the office.

She finally cornered a young man and held his coat lapel. "Elton Copper," she gasped. "I have fifty shares—that is, I had. Can you find out if it's been sold?"

"I'll try," he said, and wrenched away.

She slumped into a chair and watched the board. Elton was a half point above what she had bought it at. If it went below—

Down to thirty in the next minute.

She raised her eyes and swept the faces of the crowd. They were losing more—every face was set and white. Her eyes shifted across the room.

Tommy was standing there.

He looked calm. Calm and weary. She wanted to go to him and put her head on his shoulder. She must not sit here. He would see her. He would know, and would come over to her. She would go out and walk around until she could look through the window and see that he had gone. She stood up. She felt dizzy. The faces started whizzing around at a horrible rate, grimacing at her. Making horrible faces at her. Arms and legs were mixed up in a gyrating mass. She heard a voice say, "Galt over there—looking pretty satisfied. He's selling short—making millions—God, if I'd had the brains to get out before this—"

Her legs were numb. She felt as though she were stepping high, trying to clear the floor. The floor kept coming closer and closer. Presently it hit her chin so hard that she went over in a black world.

VOICES filtering through. Voices saying, "There, her eyes are opening. More water here—there. On the forehead. *Don't* drown her, man!"

Arms supporting her. She opened her eyes. Tommy's arms supporting her. Tommy just looking down into her eyes, whiter than she had ever seen him. There were tears on his cheeks. When he knew that she recognized him he said huskily, "My little idiot—playing the stock market, were you? Oh my white darling, what have you done to yourself?"

"Economized," she murmured. "It's—it's weakening, I guess. I feel funny."

"I've been nearly crazy, searching for you," he murmured, lifting her in his arms and starting for the door. "Advertised, private detectives—everything—find you in the last place in the world I'd expect to—"

"Elton Copper," she said, struggling weakly. "I had fifty shares—I'll be horribly in debt—"

"The program," Tommy said gently, as he placed her in a taxi and propped her head on his shoulder, "is a whopping luncheon first of all, the City Hall next, and then—we'll see about your fifty shares of Elton."

"You're taking advantage of me," she said. "I—I can't argue."

"You've argued enough," said Tommy. "You're going to marry me now, before you get away, whether you like it or not."

"Like it!" she breathed. She found that her head fit the space between his chin and shoulder like a charm. His arm was strong and tight around her. There was a pleasant odor of cologne and pipe tobacco about him. She said, "Tommy, I love you."

His arm tightened and he pulled her head from its pleasant groove just long enough to prove to her that tilted back, with his hand supporting it and his eyes looking down into hers, her head was much happier and far, far more comfortable.

Unwanted Bride

She came to him clothed in the glory of young dreams, young love, young sacrifice, but he saw only the cheap frock, the lack of that surety that wealth alone may bring—

By Eleanor Elliott Carroll

"JOYCE! Hey, there, wait a minute! Where in thunder are you headed now?"

The nasal twang of an uneducated man's voice broke through the stillness of late afternoon, halting the slender, girlish figure that was hastening through the grapefruit grove just beyond a big frame house.

She glanced uncertainly at a second grove, where the kumquat bushes stood stiffly, laden with their egg-shaped fruit, then decided that escape was impossible.

"Just going to the beach, Uncle Mart," she called in her high, sweet treble as she stepped out in full view. "Aunt Martha said I could go."

"Well, I say you can't!" was flung back sternly. "Come here; I've got somethin' to tell you."

With a sigh of disappointment Joyce Marston, known to those who loved her as Joy, retraced her steps. There was undeniable grace in her every move in spite of the heavy-soled shoes that incased small, dainty feet; in spite of the too long skirt which flapped awkwardly about her slim, well-shaped legs.

You forgot what she wore when you gazed into that flowerlike face, with its wide-spread hazel eyes, its crown of glorious, sun-kissed hair, where copper lights danced gleefully.

"What you doin' all decked out like

this?" demanded Martin Frayne, fixing her with a keen, suspicious gaze, which took in the cheap muslin frock with its far too tight bertha of coarse lace. "Where'd you get that dress?"

"I made it myself," Joy told him, spreading her hands out and down the stiff folds. "I—just wanted to look on at the boat races, Uncle Mart. The hotel closes to-morrow, you know, and this is the last time they'll have—"

"Let her go, Mart," broke in a plaintive voice, as a thin, sallow-faced woman appeared in the doorway. "The child don't have much pleasure bein' cooped up in this hot kitchen all day long. There ain't no harm in her watchin' the crowds on the beach."

Good Aunt Martha. Joy flashed her a warm, grateful glance of appreciation. Then she looked up at the beetle-browed man who towered above her, pleading in those expressive eyes.

"I won't stay long," she promised. "I'll be home before dark."

"Then you'll have to hurry some," relented Martin Frayne. "Go ahead, bein' as it's the last time, but take care you're back afore nightfall."

He watched her out of sight, his thin lips compressed tightly. Then he turned to his wife.

"I got to drive over to town this evenin', Marthy, and I ain't none too comfortable about Joyce bein' down there among all them city sports. You fix yourself up and follow her. See that she don't talk to that Fairfax feller. I'm not goin' to have another mess in my family, like the one which happened nineteen year ago. Hurry up now."

"Don't leave me here, Gene," she whispered pitifully. "Don't let them do this awful thing to me!"

He went on toward the garage, his grizzled head bowed in thought. Hard as Martin Frayne seemed, it had been a bitter blow to him when his eighteen-year-old sister, Louise, had eloped with Trenholm Marston, a youth of twenty-one, who was vacationing in Florida one winter.

There had followed ten months of silence, then Louise had come home again—alone.

"His people made him go back to college, Martin," she told her brother, trying to stifle her grief and fears. "But he's coming for me in the summer."

The summer, however, brought two tragedies. First came a letter from a northern firm of lawyers, announcing the annulment of that youthful marriage. This was followed by the swift decline of a broken-hearted young mother. Louise Marston died one beautiful June morning, little Joyce clasped to her breast.

Martin Frayne, since then, had been a harsh, unfeeling guardian to the little girl who had been left in his charge. But for kindly, sympathetic Aunt Martha, Joy's pleasures would have been few and far between.

JOYCE hastened on, skipping gleefully toward the new highway that had been completed just a week ago. A wonderful, ribbonlike sheet of concrete, bordered on each side by tall palms, the tattered fronds of which nodded friendlily at one another in the stiff breeze.

Joy regarded that road with deep affection. Hadn't Gene surveyed every inch of it and planned its construction? Handsome, stalwart Eugene Fairfax, the young civil engineer whose coming to Florida had opened a new and glorious vista for her!

It had been a genuine tragedy when the workers moved farther on and Gene had taken up headquarters at the hotel where he could survey his squad at closer range.

Gene! A hot flush stained her cheeks as she tripped along. She recalled every single incident that had occurred on the day of his arrival, five months ago. Eugene Fairfax had taken her for a mere child, at first.

"I believe you're playing truant from school," he said teasingly. "Little girls should stick to their studies."

"I'm not a little girl," was Joy's indignant reply. "I'm eighteen, and I don't go to school."

She hadn't added that Uncle Mart would not let her continue her education after she'd finished the grammar grades at the village schoolhouse.

But Gene's interest in her grew, and to him Joy owed such attentions as no one had ever before shown her. He supplied her with books; he brought her boxes of candy; he corrected her speech. And he had given her the only ornament she'd ever owned—the pretty amber chain she was wearing. She raised the beads to her lips and kissed them. Oh, if he happened to be on the beach this evening—

A HEAVY footfall interrupted her happy thoughts. She turned swiftly. A gross, red-faced man with roving black eyes that swept boldly over her slight figure, caught up with her.

"Going down to watch the regatta?" he began familiarly. "Mart said I'd catch up with you if I hurried, and you can bet I did just that. He says you can stay out a couple of hours, because I'm along."

Joy drew away from his outstretched hand. Felix Craig was per-

haps the only person in the community whom she thoroughly detested. There was something repulsive about his loose-lipped mouth and his sleekly oiled head. It was unbelievable that Uncle Mart actually wanted her to marry his overseer. Yet he had told her that this was his desire.

"I don't need company," she said stiffly. "I want to be alone."

"Alone?" sneered Craig, his large mouth curling. "Sure about that? You can't fool me, Joy. The wool ain't so easily pulled over my eyes. You're on your way to meet that city dude, Fairfax, and I'm in the way. That right?"

The girl drew herself up with unconscious dignity, flashing him an indignant look.

"Is it your business what I do?" she flared, her clear voice rising. "Move out of my way, Felix Craig, and don't follow me. I can't stand you, as I've told you a hundred times—"

A rough hand shot out and caught her by the shoulder, stopping her in the middle of an angry speech.

"You just wait till I've had my say," he ordered coarsely. "I'm going to tell you some plain facts about yourself. You don't think a fellow like Fairfax would ever marry the likes of you, do you?"

"How dare you talk to me like that!" cried Joy, jerking futilely in that powerful grip. "Let me go! I'll tell Uncle Mart—"

She continued to struggle.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Craig. "Reckon I could do some telling myself, but I'm not mean enough to do it, Joy. Give me a little kiss. Come on, be nice, and I'll not say any more."

His moist red lips were almost on hers. Joy dropped her head, an alarmed cry escaping her. A cry that was answered almost immediately, and in an unexpected fashion.

A TALL, white-clad figure was swinging around the bend, and the next instant sprang forward agilely, planting a stunning blow under the man's jaw and sending him sprawling full length, where he lay glaring up into steely blue eyes.

"Let that teach you to stop annoying Miss Marston," warned an angry voice. "Now get up and get away. If you don't I'll repeat the dose, Craig."

The newcomer advanced threateningly, but Craig leaped to his feet and slunk toward the grove, stopping at a safe distance to shake his burly fist and shout back:

"I'll get even with you for that, Fairfax; see if I don't!"

Eugene Fairfax made no reply. He had turned to the frightened girl.

"Did that coward hurt you, Joy? Tell me about it, dear."

She looked up into the clean-cut, boyish face, adoration in her eyes. Her chin quivered, but she forced a smile.

"It doesn't matter now," she quavered. "He—tried to kiss me, and you know how I hate Felix Craig. I'm so glad you came, Gene. Were you on your way to our house?"

Gene's arm slipped through hers in a comradely manner. His white teeth glistened in a reassuring smile. Both affection and pity were written on his aristocratic face. He always felt a strange sense of protectiveness toward this girl, with her innocent, widespread eyes and childlike simplicity.

"I thought I might be able to persuade Frayne to let you come down and watch the races," he answered hesitantly, giving her a critical glance. "I've got a boat, and we could row out beyond the launches."

Poor girl, he thought compassionately. It would never do to take her among the smartly groomed women who thronged the beach. She'd be an object of ridicule to any one who saw her.

"You did!" Joy exclaimed, her eyes starry. "You've got a boat? Oh, I'd love to! I can go. Uncle Mart has gone to town. He won't be back till ten o'clock."

"Then we'll risk it," decided Gene, and, leading her across the highway, he took the path that wound down to the beach.

EUGENE FAIRFAX had made a reputation as a crack oarsman on his college team. The small boat shot across the water like a bird on wing, and soon they were far out, beyond the gayly decorated launches that were now concluding the races.

The beach behind them was ablaze with twinkling lights, and shouts of laughter floated on the breeze. A band played softly. Somewhere in the now swiftly falling dusk a man was strumming a guitar and singing a love song.

Joy drank it in eagerly. She had wanted to linger awhile on shore to watch the gay throngs, but Gene had hurried her past the exquisitely gowned women, who eyed her so curiously.

Maybe it was best that they hadn't lingered. There was something wrong with her own dress, over which she'd labored so hard, thinking it exactly like the fashion sheet she tried to copy. Certainly her shoes and stockings were terribly wrong. Nobody else wore such things. Every girl she'd seen had on such adorable slippers and cobwebby hose. Joy sighed deeply as she glanced disdainfully at her feet.

"What's on your mind?" Gene wanted to know. "I heard you sigh."

"Shoes," she answered frankly. "And stockings. I look perfectly awful, but I didn't know it till I saw other girls. They—they all are so lovely, and I'm a—"

"A sweet, adorable little girl," Gene put in hastily. "There's not a woman at the big hotel, Joy, who wouldn't give her eye-teeth for your hair, your eyes, your coloring. I always think of you as I first saw you, dressed in your quaint little gingham frock. Pink, wasn't it? That's your color; that and a sort of sea green to bring out the coppery shade of your crown of glory. Don't ever bob your hair, Joy. It would be a crime."

She thrilled at his praise, mentally resolving to save her money for a sea green frock—and shiny pumps—and silk stockings. Her money? Uncle Mart only gave her two dollars a month. How long would it take to accumulate enough for a really nice outfit?

GENE broke into her mental calculations with an astounding, heart-rending announcement.

"I'm pulling out to-morrow, Joy. Work all finished. The last lap of the road was completed to-day, and I'm leaving for home. Home, in Old Virginny. Gosh, it seems like a hundred years since I left dad and Sophy and—" He broke off to stare through the semidarkness at her bowed head and shaking shoulders.

Joy, child of nature that she was, could not control her emotions. Gene going away. Going forever. Never again would they be together. A flood of tears which she tried to stop gushed from her eyes.

"Say, Joyful, this won't do!" he exclaimed in a worried tone. "Is it because I'm going, dear? Please don't

cry like that! I'll come back some day, and we'll have lots of good times together again."

"No, you'll—never—come—back," she wailed. "Never—never! I know it!"

He looked around anxiously. They were far, far from shore. Not a launch was in sight now. And just ahead loomed the faint outlines of a strip of land. He made for it rapidly. He must get the pretty child where he could console her. Poor little Joy Marston!

The keel of the boat grazed against bottom where the water suddenly grew shallow. He was out in a flash, had tied his little craft to a rocky projection, and was helping her out, a wilted, dejected, sobbing girl who clung to him as though her small hands would never release their hold.

"Do you care so much, Joy?" He asked the question huskily, his arms around her slender body.

She nodded her curly head, then buried it against his heart. Her arms stole upward and twined themselves around his neck. For a long moment they stood thus, then Gene raised her quivering chin in determined fingers, gazing deeply into those streaming eyes.

"Listen, dear," he said soothingly. "I have to go, you know. But I'm coming back. Why, I couldn't stay away from this gorgeous spot and—you. You mean a lot to me, little girl," he went on with the boyish fervor of a puzzled twenty-four. Puzzled because her outburst was totally unexpected—and embarrassing.

Involuntarily, his clasp tightened. There was something irresistible about this girl, who made no attempt to hide her devotion for him. His fair head bent suddenly. His lips closed down on her trembling red lips and stayed there.

That kiss fired Eugene Fairfax's blood. A puff of wind blew her hair against his face. It was scented like clover with her own young fragrance. He pressed her closer—closer.

All the fine chivalry of generations of aristocratic men and women from whom he was descended finally brought him back to reality. He gently released her, marveling at the glory that shone in her wonderful eyes.

The light of a full moon was now flooding earth and sea, and Joy's transfigured countenance was as clearly delineated as if the sunlight was full upon it. Tears had vanished. Her lips were parted in a smile that reminded him of a small stained-glass saint he had always admired in the chapel back home.

"YOU care, too, Gene?" she breathed in awed wonder. "For *me?*"

"Is that so strange, Joy?" he asked in a hushed whisper.

"It—it's just like a door had opened into—heaven," she told him rapturously. "Now it don't make—it *doesn't* make any difference," she corrected hastily, "if you have to leave for a little while, because I *know* you'll come back."

The childlike trust of her statement brought a sharp pang of self-reproach to the young man, even though he felt a human elation at such evidence of worship from this adorable young creature.

If only she were more like other girls of his acquaintance; more like his sister Sophy, for instance. Gene had a wholesome respect for his sister, three years his senior.

Suppose he should be mad enough to take home a crude young wife like Joy? He could imagine Sophy's con-

sternation, especially whenever some localism like "I reckon," or "I ain't," or "I come" escaped those sweet red lips. It had been a pleasant pastime to correct his little friend's speech and grammar, and Joy had proved an apt pupil. But would it be so amusing in a wife?

"Oh!" The exclamation from Joy broke his reflections. "See, Gene; we're on Ghost Island. Isn't that just wo-o-nderful! Now we can look for the Gray Lady."

She clapped her hands together gleefully. Everything having been settled fast and firmly between them—as Joy thought—her naturally effervescent spirits rose rapidly. Gene found himself laughing with her.

"A haunted spot?" he asked with a chuckle. "And who is this Gray Lady?"

"Nobody knows. Old Isom, Uncle Mart's farm hand, says she walks in the full of the moon. It's full moon tonight. I wonder if we—if we could stay here a little while and watch—"

"Why not? Nothing to prevent us that I know of."

His hand reached out and closed over hers, and again that strange thrill passed through him. What a tiny little hand. How trustfully the fingers folded themselves about his.

"Let's cross to the other side," Gene suggested. "Maybe the lady is shy about coming over here where so many boats are constantly passing."

IT was a lonely spot, that deserted island. Far off to the west gleamed the many lights of hotel and beach, but to the east there was nothing save the spectral shapes of giant cypress trees, clothed in waving Spanish moss that touched the ground.

The wind was rising. It wailed through the branches above their heads like a spirit lost and afraid. Somewhere a hoot-owl screeched gruesomely, making Joy shiver and move closer to Gene.

"Not frightened, are you, dear?" he asked laughingly.

"Not a bit," she denied vehemently. "I couldn't be—with you."

"Precious infant!"

Again his arm involuntarily encircled her. He drew her close, and together they proceeded up the steep, winding path.

They were both quite merry during that walk, laughing at and overcoming the obstacles which sometimes obstructed the way. Once it was a fallen pine whose branches spread out like ghostly arms. Gene lifted the slight form in strong arms, stifling an impulse to kiss the red lips so near his own.

Again they were brought to a sudden halt when something moved in the underbrush and scurried across their path. A huge, whitish creature that gave a guttural squawk, then rose in the air and floated away.

"There goes your Gray Lady," laughed Gene, "and she's nothing more formidable than a white heron. Tame end to a ghost hunt, isn't it?"

"I don't believe that is what Isom saw," Joy told him seriously. "Lots of people have actually seen real ghosts."

She launched into a vivid narrative of local superstitions, Gene an interested and amused listener.

So an hour passed.

A sudden gust of wind and the spatter of rain in their faces finally brought them to a stop and the realization that a storm was brewing. They hurriedly descended the cliff, making for their boat.

"We'll have to row faster than we did coming out," Gene said, glancing at the lowering clouds.

Not a ray of moonlight was now shining. There was just a faint gleam over the tossing water to lead them down the rocky footpath. But once there, Gene released the girl's hand, a gasp escaping him.

"Why—where—I certainly fastened the chain to that bowlder. Joy, it's gone! *Our boat has broken away!*"

SHE was at his side in a second, straining her gaze across the seething waves. The wind was almost a hurricane by this time, and the rain was descending in sheets.

"Oh, oh!" she cried. "What *are* we going to do? There's not even a launch in sight."

Gene ground his teeth together. What a mess to be in!

"We can't stand here and get drenched, that's certain," he said hoarsely. "Here—get under that overhanging rock, Joy. Stay there while I take a look around. Maybe I could swim it—"

She caught his coat sleeve fiercely.

"No, you couldn't! Please don't even think of such a thing! You'd drown in two minutes. Let's call—make a bonfire—do something!"

"Get under that shelter," he commanded. "Wait there till I come back."

He was gone for what seemed ages to the panic-stricken girl, whose chief fear was for his safety.

When he returned there was dejection in his footsteps. Rain had soaked him. His once immaculate white ducks were mud-spattered and clung to his body. A vivid flash of lightning revealed his stern set face, from which every trace of boyishness had been erased.

"We're here for the night," he said grimly. "No way out that I can see."

"Can't we build a fire?" Joy suggested. "Maybe somebody will see it and come out in a launch."

"We can try," was the quiet answer that held no hope. Gene was plainly worried. The situation was a bad one, in his opinion.

Together they managed to collect a pile of driftwood, dried leaves, some dead branches of pine, and Gene struck half a box of matches, only to have the blaze die down as soon as ignited.

"It's no use," he finally said, crawling under the jutting rock beside Joy. "Might as well make the best of it, and wait for whatever happens. I'm only worried about you, dear; wondering, too, what I'm going to say to Frayne when we do get you home."

"Uncle Mart *will* be furious," Joy reflected, fingering Gene's coat buttons with an affectionate touch. "But when he hears about us, I don't think he'll stay mad."

"Hears—what?"

"That we love each other."

SHE looked up shyly, but he couldn't see the delicious flush that stained her cheeks, creeping to the roots of her glorious hair. He only caught the soft inflection of that childish voice, so neglectful of its r's and g's, and sensed her utter faith in him.

A warmth stole through Eugene Fairfax. His arms went around her and his mouth sought hers.

"I do love you, pure, sweet darling that you are!" he breathed huskily. "There's not another girl in the whole world like you, Joyful."

"Always call me that, Gene," she murmured between his kisses. "I *am*

joyful. I'm so happy that I love the whole world. I don't even hate Felix Craig any longer."

She nestled contentedly in Gene's arms while she related Craig's conversation of that afternoon.

"He said you'd never think of marrying me, yet all the time you have been thinking about it, haven't you?"

Gene groaned—in spirit. Dear, innocent Joy. His kisses could mean but one thing to her simple mind. There was no guile in her mirrorlike character. She was like a sweet, old-fashioned garden that grew only fragrant flowers.

She was a flower herself, he went on thinking. A flower that could be cultivated into a gorgeous hothouse plant. Given a year or so of training, wonders could be accomplished. Even Sophy would be compelled to admit Joyce Marston's undeniable grace and beauty. See how quickly the girl had absorbed the bits of education, of culture, that he had tried to instill in her fertile brain.

As if some subconscious power had transmitted his thoughts to her, Joy spoke again at that moment:

"I was trying to remember that verse you read to me once, Gene. Something about Fate weaving a thread of life. What is it?"

He cleared his throat, then repeated:

> "For Fate has woven the thread of life with pain,
> And twins e'en from birth are misery and man—"

"Oh, that wasn't the one I meant!" Joy sat erect, her small, solemn face faintly outlined. "That's awful! I don't believe everybody has to have misery. I know I won't. The one I was thinking about said something like, 'The fingers of Fate wove on, and lo! their lives entwined—' I've forgotten the rest, but it's so beautiful that it hurts. We're like that, aren't we, Gene?"

"Yes, dear."

His lips caressed her hair, but under his breath he was muttering, "Fingers of Fate—fingers of Fate." How inexorably were those fingers weaving a web about him and this confiding little Southern girl whom he had tried to instruct, never dreaming what the consequences would be.

MORNING at last. The first feeble ray of sunlight peeped through scurrying clouds and shone directly upon the marooned young people beneath the lee of an overhanging rock.

Gene glanced down at the sleeping girl, whose head rested against his shoulder. Long lashes swept the tinted cheeks like dark curtains pulled down. Her soft red lips were slightly parted in a happy smile, and masses of curling bronze hair framed that sweet little face. She looked like a lovely child asleep, and again he thought of the stained-glass saint in the chapel back home.

He roused her gently. "Wake up, sleepy-head!"

Her eyes opened at once—great, wondering eyes, in which danced gold-flecked lights. Their expression held Gene entranced. He leaned down and kissed her before he arose.

"I think that's a fishing boat out there," he said, pointing toward the now quiet ocean. "Yes, it is. I'm going to hail them."

They walked side by side to the land's edge, and then Gene's clear, ringing shout echoed over the lonely scene.

"He heard you!" Joy cried excitedly, "and he's turning. It's old George Duff. Gene, I—I'm afraid—"

"Afraid of what?" he demanded, forcing a gayety he was far from feeling. "Not of Duff, surely?"

"No-o, but Uncle Mart will—"

"Nonsense," Gene cut in. "We met with an accident that could happen to any one, especially in such a storm. Leave it to me, dear. I'll tell the whole story. Your people know me, and they certainly know you were safe in my protection."

But throughout the short boat ride shoreward, and also throughout their walk to the big frame house, Gene was unusually silent. He hadn't liked the knowing smile on old Duff's leathery face, nor the inquisitive questions he had asked. But he squared his shoulders determinedly when he and Joy mounted the creaky wooden steps to the kitchen porch.

Martha Frayne, clad in faded gingham, her sallow face peaked and worried, stifled a cry as they entered. She shot an uneasy glance toward the adjoining room, her hand going to her open mouth. But Gene disregarded that silent signal.

"Awfully sorry, Mrs. Frayne," he commenced. "Joy and I were marooned all night on Ghost Island. Our boat was swept away, and—"

"Sorry!"

The word flew through the room like a cannon ball. A tall, lanky figure filled the doorway, and Martin Frayne's piercing eyes met those of the young man, who faced him fearlessly.

"Is that all you've got to say for yourself, Fairfax? Take this girl out and keep her till day, then say you're *sorry!* What're you goin' to do about it, sir? This girl's character is blackened for the rest of her life, as you ought to know. It's up to you, whatever's done, young man."

ANOTHER shadow darkened the outer doorway. Felix Craig came into the kitchen.

Gene turned around at the sound of his footfall, and something in the man's leering expression illuminated his brain. In that moment Gene knew how his boat had got away. This was Craig's revenge for the blow he'd given him.

"Reckon as how this chap ain't goin' to do nothin', Frayne," Craig said coarsely. "No use to throw the girl at his head. I'll stand by. I'll marry her to-day."

He laid a heavy hand on Joy's arm.

She jerked away from that rough hold and ran on the other side of Gene. There was horror in her dilated eyes.

"Don't let him come near me!" she gasped, slipping her hand into Gene's. "I hate him!"

A strong arm encircled her. Gene glared at the overseer, then turned to Martin Frayne. His voice was steeled with determination.

"Joy is going to be my wife, Frayne," he said firmly. "I'm leaving for Virginia this afternoon, but I'm coming back in June—for her—"

"Coming back in June?" shouted the enraged man. "Yes, I reckon you are—*not!* I heard that same tale nineteen years ago, when Marston was supposed to come here for his wife and child. I know your sort like a book. No, sirree! You'll either marry that girl to-day, or else she'll take Craig's offer. I'll not have another mess in my family—"

"Mart, don't! Please listen to Mr. Fairfax." Martha's quavering voice interrupted, but her enraged husband brushed her aside.

"You keep out o' this!" he cried hoarsely. "It's none o' your business. I'm waitin' to hear what you're goin' to do," he went on, turning a livid, unshaven face to the tall, steely-eyed man who met his stare without flinching.

The silence that followed was tense, and far more dramatic than words could ever have been. Eugene Fairfax's firm hold upon the quivering little body pressed so close to his did not slacken. Rather did he draw Joy even closer.

He stared down at her uplifted face and read the terror in those wide, appealing eyes. His throat felt constricted, his mouth was dry.

"*Don't* leave me here, Gene," she whispered pitifully. "Don't let—them—do this—awful thing to me!"

He gave a quick glance around at Felix Craig, big, burly, sneering. The wolflike expression about the overseer's loose-lipped mouth roused every atom of chivalry in Gene's nature. Rage against the man welled in his heart until he could only see that leering face through a crimson mist.

He released himself from those clinging little hands and strode over to Craig, fists clenched, eyes blazing.

"Get out of here!" he cried, lifting one sinewy arm in warning. "Before I give you what you deserve. *You* unchained that boat last night, you scoundrel! Get out of my sight—"

Craig cowered beneath the fire in those blue eyes, turned and disappeared, slamming the door behind him. Then, with head uplifted proudly, lips compressed to a thin, white line, Gene came back and again drew Joy to him.

"Whatever arrangements have to be made, Frayne," he said with forced composure, "attend to them at once. Joy and I will be married to-day."

He leaned over the girl, his thick fair hair brushing her tumbled curls. His voice was lowered to a tender whisper now:

"You are going away with me, dear. To-day. Going as my own little wife. There's nothing to be afraid of any more, as long as you live."

IT was a quiet ceremony, that hurried marriage which took place at midday in the Fraynes' old musty parlor. Gene, with his face as white as his collar, stood before the country minister with Joy at his side, and mechanically repeated the vows that made the trembling girl his bride.

Trembling, but no longer from fear. A trance of awed inspiration shone from those great bright eyes fixed straight ahead, as she listened breathlessly to those solemn words:

"For better, for worse, until death you do part—"

Oh, there could be no "worse!" Not with Gene. No matter what happened in the long, glorious years that stretched ahead, she would be his and he would be hers. Involuntarily, her wavering hand went out toward him and was immediately caught in a warm, comforting pressure.

A mocking bird, perched in the crepe myrtle bush near the window, sang joyously throughout the brief service.

Martha Frayne, her face buried in one corner of her white apron, wept audibly, while Martin Frayne, his stern-visaged countenance set in forbidding lines, kept his suspicious gaze fastened upon the tall, steely-eyed youth who was being forced into this marriage with his niece.

History was repeating itself. Nineteen years ago, Louise Frayne had left her home with just such another young

aristocrat. *She* had come home a deserted, unwanted wife—to die. Would a like fate befall Joyce, her daughter?

Slim, incredibly youthful, and clad in an ill-fitting blue serge suit that sagged dejectedly in the back and was far too tight across the shoulders; with heavy-soled oxfords on her small, well-shaped feet; with a hurriedly made black velvet béret crushed down over her sunny hair, Joy did not look the part of a bride.

Even her uncle realized this. With his thousand acres of fruit groves which netted him enormous yearly profits, he had begrudged his sister's child the bare necessities of life, and his long-calloused conscience now smote him.

He turned and hastily left the room as the minister's concluding words were spoken. Only Martha was there to wish the young couple happiness.

"Be good to her, Mr. Fairfax," sobbed the soft-hearted woman, tears trickling down her yellowed checks. "She ain't more'n a child."

Gene straightened himself haughtily. Impatience threaded his voice when he replied. Anxiety to get away from it all was apparent in his gestures.

"Certainly I'll be good to her," he said curtly. "Joy hasn't known much kindness in this home, of that I'm well aware."

But Joy turned back as he was leading her away, and flung her arms about Martha's bony neck.

"You've always been wo-o-nderful to me, Aunt Martha," she quavered, pressing her lips on the woman's trembling mouth. "I'll write to you—I'll come back to see you when we're in Florida this summer. Good-by, good-by!"

A village taxi took them to the station. Joy glanced back. Martha Frayne stood on the steps, waving her apron until they were out of sight.

Two bright tears dimmed the girl's bright eyes, but she brushed them away as she turned toward the silent man beside her. How queer he looked. How different. In sudden panic she nestled close to him.

"Do you love me, Gene?" she whispered wistfully. "Really and truly?"

"Haven't I proved it?" was the evasive reply, accompanied by a mechanical smile that seemed to wither her very soul.

She drew away instinctively. This white-lipped, moody-eyed young husband of hers was an utter stranger. Where was the fun-loving, boyish Gene whom she'd worshiped with every beat of her adoring heart for the past five months?

THE train sped onward, passing through marshes that seemed endless to Joy, huddled in one corner of her seat, staring out with unseeing eyes at the monotonous scenery. Now and then as some one passed down the aisle she looked up hopefully, only to turn back to the window with a sigh.

It had been like this for three days. Gene was actually avoiding her. She knew it now. Punctiliously polite, considerate of her slightest comfort though he was, he seldom sat beside her, and when he did he was restless, palpably ill at ease.

At Norfolk, where they had stopped over for a day, his chief concern seemed to be about her clothes, the new outfit which he'd chosen himself.

She fingered the tweed skirt of her smart suit, glanced in the panel mirror at the black velour hat that covered her sunny hair. How proud she'd been when she donned this stylish outfit—

Gene's gift. How gleefully she had presented herself to him, expectant of his praise.

"You look a hundred per cent better now," was his glum comment. And then he had abruptly left her. He was always leaving on some hasty mission.

"I am Joyce Marston—your daughter!"

Joy's sensitive mouth quivered at the memory of Gene's many criticisms, during this strange honeymoon. "Don't carry your gloves—wear them." And, "Don't look so conscious of your clothes." Another time it was: "Do try to cultivate a little dignity, Joyce, and stop going into raptures over all you see. It's awfully bad form."

Even the smile was no longer on her lips. They drooped at the corners like those of a cruelly wounded child, and her great, wondering eyes wore an expression of bewilderment. No longer was she called Joyful, or even Joy. Gene impressed it upon her that hereafter he was going to say Joyce.

A strange honeymoon, indeed. No tender love scenes, no caresses save a perfunctory kiss on her cheek when bidding her good night. At the hotel in Norfolk where they had occupied adjoining rooms, she'd distinctly heard Gene turn the key in the lock as he firmly closed the communicating door. She had cried herself to sleep that night.

She wistfully regarded the suède pumps and silk stockings that would once have sent her spirits soaring. They held no charm now that she owned them. You lost interest in clothes and everything when your heart was like a leaden weight within you.

GENE was pacing up and down the smoking compartment, his hands locked behind him, his brows drawn together in a frown that did not sit well upon his boyish countenance. A muscle in his firm jaw was working nervously.

Home lay just ahead, and Gene

dreaded the inevitable arrival, the introduction of Joy to his family. He had done the right, the only thing that a man of honor could do, he consoled himself.

No one could have withstood the girl's frantic appeal to save her from a man like Felix Craig. Her ashen face and terrified eyes would have haunted him for the rest of his life if he'd left her to the mercies of Frayne and Craig.

But Joy wasn't at all the type of woman he'd sometimes pictured as his desired wife. The shadowy Mrs. Eugene Fairfax of his dreams was always a stately, self-possessed society girl, quite at ease anywhere—one who would be both wife and intellectual companion. Instead, he was tied irrevocably to an unformed child, whose every word and action must be supervised before she could be introduced to his friends.

What would his father say? How was Sophy going to receive Joy? He had sent several long telegrams ahead, apprising them of his marriage and home-coming. He wondered whether any one would meet them at the station.

"Westville!" shouted a voice, and Gene caught up his suitcase. The next stop was Fairhaven, their destination.

Joy looked up as he approached her seat, chilled by the wintry smile he gave her.

"Almost there," he announced, trying to sound cheery. "Get your things together, and don't look so frightened. Here, let me fasten that bag."

She sensed his discomfort, although not exactly understanding. She could read his disappointment when they stepped from the train and were met by an elderly colored man who bowed profoundly to her, then took their baggage to the big sedan waiting there.

"Family well, Amos?" Gene asked as they sped down a tree-bordered avenue in the twilight of that April day.

"Yassuh, quite well," the old negro answered. "De colonel he have a smitch of a cold, suh, but he's all right now, an' Miss Sophy was a goin' to visit up in Albemarle, but she waited to welcome you an' de young missus."

"WELCOME you an' de missus." It sounded so friendly that a light of hope dawned in Joy's somber eyes. She stole a glance at Gene. At the same moment he turned and looked down at her.

She couldn't see his expression very clearly, but from the still faint light in the westering sky his eyes looked softer than they had done since their marriage. He leaned close to her, and, thinking it an evidence of affection, Joy snuggled up to him with an adoring upward gaze.

"I want to warn you," he whispered, "not to speak of what happened at your home—on the island. And don't talk about your people at all. Keep your history to yourself."

He moved away from her, folding his arms.

Cut to the quick, she drew away to the farthest side of the seat. Her small chin trembled, and she bit down hard on her lower lip. Gene was ashamed of her. He hadn't cared, after all. He had married her because of pity, and now he was sorry—sorry.

The unwanted bride choked back the sob that rose in her throat, and lifted her head with a proud little gesture. In that moment the childishness of her nature died and a woman's stoic soul was born.

They were now entering the big wrought-iron gates. An avenue of

Norway maples led up to the portico of a huge, white-pillared house, the doorway of which was wide open.

A tall, erect old gentleman, with snowy hair and close-clipped mustache, met them at the top of the steps. His arm went around Gene. Joy heard: "My boy, my boy!" Heard Gene answer: "Dad! It's glorious to be home again."

Again the lump in Joy's throat had to be valiantly choked down. Every one in the world had love save herself. Both father and son appeared to have forgotten she was there.

But Colonel Fairfax immediately turned toward her and took her cold hands in a warm pressure. He stared into her pale little face kindly.

"So this is Joyce," he said gently. "Such a wee baby to be married. Gene, you're a cradle robber. Come in, children. Sophy is impatient to meet her new sister."

He led Joy through a wide, beautifully furnished hall and into a huge room. Red leather chairs cheered and brightened the somber library, with its high walls of paneled oak, while several shaded lamps cast a glow over the homelike scene.

FROM the depths of a cushion-piled couch arose a slender, cold-eyed young woman, with a wealth of fair hair framing a cameolike face. There was the pride of race and breeding in Sophy Fairfax's greeting of her brother and his young wife.

Whatever she may have felt was not evinced in her words, though her light blue eyes did wear a surprised look when they rested for a brief moment upon the shrinking girl beside her brother.

"Your train was late, Gene," she told him, smiling coldly and offering a cheek for his kiss. "So this is—your wife?" She extended a limp hand to Joy, quickly dropping it again. "Dinner is waiting, but I suppose you'd like to go up to your room first. I've had the guest chamber aired for you, Gene, and—"

"No use to go up," her brother put in hastily, a red flush rising to the roots of his blond hair. "Joyce isn't tired, are you—dear?"

Hope sprang into life again at this perfunctory term of endearment, and Joy hastened to assure him that she was quite fresh.

Colonel Fairfax waited till she had removed her coat and hat, and had smoothed down the rebellious hair that curled in a thousand tendrils about her wistful young face, then gravely offered his arm. Sophy and Gene followed them into the luxurious dining room.

The large round table, with its priceless lace cloth and the bowl of fragrant narcissus in the center, the gleaming silver and sparkling glassware—all struck some chord in Joy's starved heart, some unsatisfied hunger for the beautiful things of life.

A soft-shod colored maid passed tempting dishes. The low-voiced conversation that went on between the family, with an occasional polite remark to her, made her feel strange and unsuited to her surroundings.

She breathed a sigh of relief when the meal was over and they returned to the library.

IT was the colonel who, several hours later, noted the tired droop of her slender form, the shadow under her wistful eyes, the pathetic little lines that quivered about her childish mouth. All this awoke his pity.

Gene and Sophy were deep in con-

versation across the room, and the old man had been trying to draw out the girl about her home life in Florida, puzzled at the stilted, almost frightened replies. He now called to his son:

"Joyce is very tired, my boy, and I think you'd better show her to your room. Good night, my dear," he said to Joy. "To-morrow I'll drive you over the plantation. We've no orange groves up here, but I've got the finest tobacco fields in the whole country. Good night."

Gene led the way up winding stairs, and Joy followed mutely, a thousand thoughts and conjectures spinning in her brain. Now that they were in his own home, now that they were at last alone, would he unbend—be more like the happy-go-lucky youth who had won her whole tender, girlish heart? Would he kiss her as he'd done that night on the island?

She scarcely glanced at the big, comfortable room, with its four-poster bed, warm bright rugs and lace-draped windows. Her eager eyes were fixed on Gene's face.

Why were his lips set so firmly? Why that strange, icy gleam in his eyes? They looked as cold as flint—as Sophy's had done whenever they rested upon *her*.

Joy stood hesitant for a moment, twisting her fingers together until scarlet lines showed against the tan of those little hands. Suddenly she ran over and threw her arms about Gene's unresponsive body.

"Don't you love me any more?" she cried wistfully. "You look so—strange, Gene. Like as if you was mad with me."

It was an unfortunate grammatical error. The hot blood flowed into that patrician face above hers, and Eugene Fairfax stepped back.

"For heaven's sake, please learn to use decent English," he said angrily. "'Like as if you was mad with me.'" He mimicked her tone perfectly. "What would my people think if they heard you, Joyce? No, I'm not angry, of course not. I'm tired; I want to be alone. I'm going to my own room across the hall. You'll be comfortable in here, but if you wish anything, ring for a maid. Good night."

Gone! Tears she could no longer control welled in Joy's eyes as she threw herself face downward on the bed. Gene didn't love her. Gene was ashamed of her. For a long time she lay there, sobbing bitterly. Suddenly she sat up, her eyes wild with a feverish light.

"Love. Love. He *shall* love me! I'll make myself all over for him! Please, God, help me—help me."

IN the days that followed, Joy was the one who avoided Gene. Sometimes, stabbed to the quick by that silent little figure, always buried in some musty old book, Gene made overtures of friendliness, but beyond a faint smile that was sadder than tears, she offered no encouragement to his efforts at entertainment. She talked very little, and always with a painstaking slowness that would have been amusing had it been less pathetic.

Colonel Fairfax was the only one in that household who saw beneath the surface, but even he did not know the state of affairs between the young couple. His heart went out to the girl who was so eager to study.

"I didn't have a chance to go to school long," she confided to him, "and I do want to know *everything*, because Gene—he—he does—"

"Does he?" The old man's lips twitched under his clipped mustache.

"Then he's picked it up since his college days. All he knew then was how to spend money. Bring your problems to me, Joyce. I'll be glad to help."

He liked the girl more and more. He loved to look at her. Those great, sad eyes, the delicate texture of her skin, her glorious coppery hair—all were a delight to gaze upon. And, despite her colloquial speech and a number of quaint expressions peculiar to herself, she was rapidly winning her way into his heart.

Colonel Fairfax admired the unmistakable air of good breeding in her gestures, in the carriage of her slim, straight body. He recognized these evidences of innate refinement, and it touched him deeply to see how hard the girl tried to improve herself. The colonel and Joy became fast friends in a very short while.

Sophy was not so easily won. Her brother's hasty marriage to an unknown, unsophisticated girl had been a bitter disappointment. She'd cherished other plans for Gene. Even Joy vaguely sensed this when, one morning, three weeks after her arrival, Miss Fairfax announced at the breakfast table that a guest was coming that day.

"Marion Ambler is home from Boston, Gene," Sophy said, looking up from her mail. "She's inviting herself over for luncheon."

Gene looked up quickly, first at his sister, then at Joy. His blue eyes lingered on his young wife as though he were seeing her for the first time. Such a changed little person.

The sweet, solemn young face rose like a snowdrop above the simple, one-piece frock of sea green dimity, a shade that brought out the wonderful lights in her glorious hair—hair that was wound like a shining crown about her head, escaping in foamy ringlets that nestled against her pale cheeks and blue-veined temples.

More than ever did Joy remind him of the stained-glass saint in the chapel, and he felt a strange tug at his heart. His wife, this exquisite young creature, with her shadowed, almost tragic eyes. He gave her a swift smile of approval.

"THAT color is awfully becoming to you, Joyce," he praised. Then turning to Sophy: "Marion back home? She's been away quite a while."

"Nearly two years," Sophy answered. "She evidently hasn't heard of your marriage, for she hopes Gene is home, and sends you her love."

"I'll be glad to see Marion again," was his careless reply. His eyes were still fixed on Joy's white face. What had become of her roseleaf color? She looked like a fragile flower that had been denied the warmth of sunlight.

When they arose from the table, he slipped his arm through hers and led her outside.

"Too fine a day to stay indoors," he remarked casually. "Let's stroll down to the bay shore. Did you ever see so many boats? Look at that nifty launch out there. Must have anchored in the night, because it wasn't there yesterday."

Joy could scarcely see either the luxurious launch or the rippling Chesapeake Bay, which flowed past the Fairfax estate. Her heart was singing a pæan of ecstasy.

Gene was again like his old self. There was warmth in the pressure of his hand on her arm; there was a new light in his blue eyes. She must remember not to talk much. Not to make any mistakes that might offend him.

"Green is your color, Joy," he went

on, giving her an admiring look. How beautiful she was growing. "It brings out the gorgeous lights in your hair—your eyes. Only you're a bit too pale today. We'll have to get in the open more. Like to learn tennis?"

Thrilled to the core of her being at his solicitude, she raised her eyes to his. But her answer was stilted, schoolgirlish.

"I would like it very much, thank you," she said primly. "In the afternoons, though. Colonel Fairfax reads with me every morning."

Gene's infectious laugh rang out. What a serious little darling she was. His wife! And what a sulky snob he'd been throughout all these weeks. With such a priceless possession right in his reach, belonging to him! His arm slid naturally around her lithe young body.

"Do you know you are the loveliest little sweetheart in the whole world, Joy?" he said in a low, shaken tone.

"Oh!" Joy gasped, her color returning to her cheeks, like flames driven by the wind. Gene had called her "sweetheart." Gene's love was coming back.

"If there weren't so many eyes watching," he continued softly, "I'd kiss the red back into your lips—"

At that moment Sophy appeared on the terrace beyond the porch steps. She called imperatively: "Gene, Marion is here. Come in."

"Darn!" The expletive escaped him as he glanced around, seeing the smart roadster in the driveway. "What on earth made her drive out so early? You'll like Marion Ambler, Joy. She's a peach of a good sport. I hope she doesn't stay long, though. I want to talk to—to my wife—alone."

Joy could scarcely see a foot ahead as they retraced their steps to the house. The pæan her heart was singing grew louder and louder—almost like the chorus of a thousand voices: "Gene loves me, loves me, loves me!"

Forgotten was the past, completely wiped out the bitter memories of his neglect. Her very soul seemed sweeping on toward a glorious paradise. Her feet scarcely touched ground. They were like wings bearing her on and on.

MARION AMBLER was a tall, handsome girl, with fair hair and brown eyes that were very much alive behind long, curling lashes.

Those piercing eyes surveyed Joy from head to feet. There was a supercilious curl to her sophisticated mouth for an instant, then she turned to Gene, running on in a stream of light chatter which would never have deceived a more worldly person than Joy.

"You're the most irresponsible person I ever knew, Gene," she said lightly. "Springing a surprise like this on an old friend. Why didn't you send us cards or something? Why, I haven't got my breath since Sophy announced the ghastly news of your marriage."

"Ghastly?" Gene repeated, smiling down at Joy. "Glorious, you mean."

Again Joy thrilled. This sudden change in Gene was a miracle.

There was a queer narrowing of Miss Ambler's dark eyes, and she hastily changed the subject. She didn't address Joy again, but rattled on about her stay in Boston, where she'd been studying voice. It was not until after luncheon, when she and Joy happened to be alone for a few minutes, that she began plying the girl with personal questions.

"Your name was Marston, you say? Of course, you're no relation to the Maryland Marstons."

Joy twisted her handkerchief in nervous fingers, wishing Sophy and Gene would return. They were a bul-

wark between her and this smoldering-eyed woman, whose intonation was an insult.

"I—I may be," Joy faltered. "My—father came from—Baltimore."

She stopped short, recalling Gene's admonition against talking of her former life or family. Not for worlds could she again offend him.

"Oh, I don't suppose you're any connection of the family I mean," Marion Ambler continued rudely. "Trenholm Marston is a millionaire, you know. That's his yacht out on the bay. You can see it from this window."

Sophy and Gene came in just then, armed with tennis rackets and balls. Gene was startled at the expression in Joy's eyes, and went straight across to her.

"Are you ill, dear?" he asked tenderly. "You look so—"

"No, not ill—not at all," she denied. "I—I'm going to my room awhile. I'll come out—later on, and watch—the game."

SHE fled from the room before he could stop her, Marion Ambler's voice following her: "Come on, Gene. Surely the moon-mad days of married bliss are about over."

Married bliss. Upstairs at her window, Joy thought of those words. What *was* married bliss? Something *she* had never known. For more than an hour she sat there, her eyes fixed upon the long, graceful yacht which Miss Ambler had said belonged to Trenholm Marston. Was he her father? Oh, he must be! There couldn't be two persons with that name.

A gnawing ache grew within her. Something that Aunt Martha once told her now came back to memory: "If it hadn't of been for Mart, I believe your father would've come for you long ago."

Suppose that stranger father knew his daughter was so near? To belong, really belong to some one—maybe Gene might be proud of her then. He was kinder already, but if a man like Trenholm Marston claimed her as his daughter, Gene would care lots more, she reasoned childishly. She *couldn't* hate her own father, even if he had deserted his girl-wife and his baby. Her lonely heart reached out for some tie of blood. Maybe there ***had*** been some terrible mistake—Uncle Mart was a hard, unfeeling man.

A spring shower had arisen suddenly. There were no longer any sounds from the tennis court, and through the mist over the water it looked as if that vessel was moving closer to the shore. It *was* moving!

She stood up, her knees trembling violently. Just a short span between her and her one living relative. If she were down at the little pier below, and that yacht should come within calling distance—

Then she was hurriedly slipping into a raincoat; the next moment found her rushing down a rear stairway and running wildly toward the sandy strip of beach that edged the Fairfax grounds.

Halfway to the beach she stopped, disappointment flowing through her. The yacht wasn't moving. The mist had deceived her. She was as far off from that unknown parent as though thousands of miles separated them.

She was standing there undecided, the rain drenching her uncovered head, when voices issuing from a little vine-hung summerhouse floated out to her. Marion Ambler was talking, and it sounded as if she'd been crying.

"You poor, impetuous boy. Don't you realize you've ruined your life?"

"How ruined?" Gene asked.

"Why, playing the chivalrous knight to a pitiful, unformed child like the one you've married. Now don't assume indignation with me, Gene. After all that's been between us, I have the right to speak frankly. Can you introduce the girl into our circle? Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?"

"Look here, Marion—"

"No, you can't silence me, Gene. You did love me once—you do yet. You can't deny it. Gene, Gene!" She was sobbing now, the broken sobs of a woman who has renounced all pride. "To—think—you'd throw yourself away on an illiterate creature—like a Florida cracker—"

"She's not that bad. She can be taught—educated. You don't understand that I—"

JOY waited to hear no more. With ashen face and quivering lips, she fled from that spot, headed toward the water. If she had lingered only one moment longer she would have heard the rest of Gene's sentence: "You don't understand that I love my wife, and can't listen to your criticisms, Marion, even if we have been friends all our lives. I thought I cared for you once, but you yourself ended that long ago—"

But Joy didn't hear. Maddened with shame, the red-hot waves of which scorched her through and through, she made her way to the beach, stumbling, falling, rising to her feet again to stagger on—on—on.

It didn't look so far to that big yacht, the beacon that seemed beckoning her. Lights had sprung up all over the vessel because of the early darkness.

She stood at the very edge of the water, both arms held out, tears flowing down her white cheeks. The rain now poured down in torrents, but she was unaware of the fact. She only knew that no one in the whole wide world wanted her.

Gene and Marion—they loved each other—she stood between them and happiness—get away—anywhere. Could she deliberately step down into that black water and let the waves cover her forever?

Then her tortured eyes suddenly fell upon a little boat that was fastened to a pier. A dilapidated affair, that small boat that had not been used for years. But Joy only saw in it a means of escape from a home that had suddenly become a place of unbearable shame and misery.

No longer could she stay where every one was ashamed of her. No longer could she humiliate Gene, or rob him of his rightful happiness. "You've ruined your life," Marion Ambler had told him.

"He can—make it all over—again," she gasped jerkily. "With me—gone—he can marry her and—be—happy."

She felt in the pocket of her dress, the little green dress Gene had admired, and found the pad and pencil she always carried around, in which to jot down any new word she might learn. She couldn't go off without some message for Gene, to let him know he was free.

Unsteadily, shielding the pad beneath her slicker, she scrawled in an unformed handwriting:

GENE:

I was outside the summerhouse and heard everything. I know now that you could never care for me. I know you love Miss Ambler, and I'm making you free, in the only way I can. Good-by.

JOY.

She placed that pitiful message in the pocket of the raincoat, then removed the garment and laid it on the sands, weighting it down with a few stones.

The next instant she had stepped into the rotten old boat, had picked up the equally rotten oars, and was awkwardly plying her way through the tossing waves, her strained gaze fastened ahead—on that long white vessel, her one last hope.

EXCITEMENT reigned in the Fairfax house several hours later, when Joy's absence was discovered. This wasn't until the dinner hour, when Gene went bounding up the stairs in search of her.

He opened her door and peeped into the darkened room. There was light enough in his eyes now to have illuminated any shadowy place. His conversation with Marion Ambler had ended angrily, he defending his young wife vehemently.

"Don't let's discuss the subject any farther, Marion," he had said stiffly, rising to his feet and staring down at his lifelong friend with blazing eyes. "She's a million times too good for me, as I've just found out, fool that I've been. I worship her, my little stained-glass saint, and I thank whatever fate took me to Florida last winter, to find *my wife.*"

Miss Ambler had left directly afterward, and Gene remained outside for another hour, utterly unconscious of the storm because of his newly discovered happiness that surged through him like a torrent.

How cruelly he had treated the trustful, pathetically dependent young girl whom he'd married. He remembered with a flush of shame how he had put her clinging arms from him on that night of their arrival, solely because of her childish error in speech: "You look like as if you was mad with me, Gene."

Ashamed of Joy? Why, he ought to get down on his knees and thank God for such a precious possession. Even dad adored her, and *his* affections were not easily won.

Happiness loomed just ahead. He would take Joy among *any* of his friends, defying them to find one flaw in his wife. He'd tell her of his love this very night. He thrilled at the thought of those warm arms around his neck, those sweet soft lips on his.

"Where is Joy?" he asked when summoned by the dinner gong.

No one had seen her, however, and Gene himself went in search.

"Are you asleep, sweetness?" he called out through the gloom of that big, silent room, where poor little Joy had spent lonely, unhappy hours.

There was no answer. Gene flashed on the chandelier and looked about eagerly. Two tiny slippers peeped from beneath the huge four-poster bed. His heart pounded at the sight. He wanted to pick them up and press his lips to them.

He called again, thinking she might be in the adjoining bathroom, but, receiving no answer, he went bounding downstairs again and into the library, which was also deserted.

Followed a half hour of bewilderment and conjecture, then one of the maids recalled having seen young Mrs. Fairfax going toward the beach some time in late afternoon.

THE storm was over and a moon sailed high in the heavens. Gene's swift stride took him down to the beach in a few minutes. He looked around dazedly, his eyes falling upon

a little blue slicker that was weighted down with several stones. He picked the garment up wonderingly, recognizing it as Joy's.

What was it doing here, with those stones upon it? He called her: "Joy! Where are you, dearest?" But only the echo of his own voice replied.

"She *must* be at the house," he decided, not noticing the old boat was gone. No one ever used it, as it was like a sieve. His wonder was about her coat. Why had she left it on the beach?

His caressing fingers felt the pad in the pocket, and when he again entered the hall he drew it out. One startled glance at that scrawled message in a round, childish script and then a man's broken cry resounded through the house, bringing Colonel Fairfax, Sophy, and several servants running.

"Gone—she's gone, dad," came a hollow, broken voice. "I've killed her as surely as if I'd stabbed her in the heart. I—am—worse than a—murderer—"

Gene was reeling, swaying dizzily. His father caught him as he fell.

For hours that night there were torch lights going up and down the bay, but the searching party ceased their hunt when they found a small rowboat turned upside down, with a portion of the rotten bottom gone.

TOO heartbroken to notice anything amiss, Joy had paddled the old boat far out from shore before she became aware of its condition. The water rising about her feet was the first indication of a leakage, and this was growing worse with every second.

Up above her ankles it rose, steadily, swiftly now. And the human instinct of self-preservation ingrained in every one brought her thoughts back to her danger. She made a frantic effort to turn around, but one of the old oars snapped off like a pipe-stem and went swirling away. In her terror at this, the other one slipped from her fingers.

The water was rising—rising. Almost to her knees now. She clambered to the seat, kneeling there and shrieking wildly:

"Help! Help!" A futile cry that died out like a whisper in the face of a whistling wind.

There was a light playing around her, but clinging to the side of the now overturned boat, she took it for lightning. Nothing mattered any longer. Life was almost over. The short eighteen years she had lived, unwanted, unloved, were ending. In another hour she would be beyond earth and the awful anguish of knowing that she stood between Gene and his happiness —Gene and the woman he loved.

Even the father she had yearned to see and talk to, just once, would never know his daughter had died so close to his anchored yacht.

She tried to turn so as to have one last look at that beautiful boat before the loosening clutch of her fingers sent her down—down—but nothing but high, lashing waves met her strained stare. A sudden jar sent her frail raft out of reach, and she felt herself sinking.

The water closed over her; she knew no more.

JOY returned to consciousness to find herself in a brightly lighted room. Or was it a room? She had never seen one exactly like it.

The bed on which she lay was a narrow berth, fastened to a wall, as was the dressing table just opposite, and the marble washstand on the opposite side of a draped doorway.

Those satin draperies were parted at that moment and a man's head and shoulders appeared. He was a finely built man of perhaps forty, with reddish hair turning slightly gray at the temples, and deep, piercing eyes.

"Well, young lady," he said cheerily, coming toward her. "I see you are quite yourself this morning. You had a narrow shave last night. My searchlight picked you out just in the nick of time."

"Last night? Picked me up?" Joy sat erect, holding the blankets about her shoulders. Beneath those blankets she had discovered that she wore a huge pair of pyjamas that swallowed her slight figure.

"You're on my yacht, you see," smiled the stranger. "This is the Flying Cloud. I am Trenholm Marston. And you are—"

"I am Joyce Marston, daughter of Louise Frayne Marston and—*your daughter, too, father*," she said slowly. "I was—trying to get out to you when —my rowboat sank."

It was so quietly said, so naturally, that the man's first move was to drop into a chair where he sat, staring at her as if he fancied she might be insane.

"My—Louise—what did you say?" he gasped, the color leaving his handsome face. "My wife is dead—years ago. The baby—it died, too, so Martin Frayne wrote me. You can't be—it's impossible!"

"Uncle Mart hated you," went on the sweet young voice. "And I reckon that's why he said I—died, too. He's told me many times that you had divorced my mother, or something—annulled it, I think. That you didn't want me at all, and—"

"It was a lie! A cruel, heartless lie!" broke from Trenholm Marston's white lips.

The next moment found him beside Joy, his strong arms infolding her slight form, his red-brown hair, that was so like hers, mingling with the rippling locks that spread out in a shining mass over the pillows.

Father and daughter were together for the first time. The eyes of both were misted with tears.

THERE was not the slightest doubt in Trenholm Marston's mind concerning the validity of Joy's claim upon him. One searching glance of that sweet young face revealed far more than volumes of documents could ever have done. She was so like the Louise he had loved and lost.

He told his own story as she lay in his arms. He had, at his father's insistence, returned to Princeton to await his graduation, and Louise went back to her brother. There was nothing else to do at the time, the elder Marston being a stubborn, obdurate parent.

"I was just about to go South, to see her and—you, dear, who had arrived scarcely a week before, when Frayne wrote me of her death—and yours. He said both of you were gone, and added many other harsh things which I didn't deserve.

"That blow almost killed me, little daughter," he continued. "I went abroad—stayed several years. When I came back to this country I avoided Florida. Never wanted to see the place again. And now *you* come, looking for me. Tell me all about it, dear. Who brought you to Virginia? How did you know this was my yacht? With whom have you been staying?"

He never quite forgot the expression in her eyes, nor the heartbreaking quiver of her mouth as she faltered out her unhappy story.

"I—I can't tell you, father. Not all,

anyway. I—I thought somebody—cared for me, and I came up—to Virginia—I've been staying with his—people. But I'm not—I haven't any education, you know. I make awful mistakes. He—he was ashamed of me—"

"Of you—*my* daughter?" came from those arrogant lips, and the dark eyes flashed a heated accompaniment.

"He—doesn't know you," Joy said simply. "But it wouldn't make any difference now. Gene—he loves another girl. Oh, please don't ask me any more! I—can't—talk—about it."

"There, there, darling." Again she was caught in a loving embrace. "We won't talk about it now, if it hurts you. We're sailing to-day, little daughter, wherever you want to go. I've a few friends aboard—all men, but we are going to put into the nearest port and get rid of them. I want my girl all to myself, and she's the one who shall hereafter give orders on this ship."

AND so Joy had come into her own. It was wonderfully sweet to be petted, idolized, waited upon, as she was now. Glorious to feel necessary to some one's happiness.

Trenholm Marston's splendid yacht sailed down the bay, stopped for a few days at Norfolk, where loads of exquisite clothes for Joy were brought aboard. Dresses, coats, hats, shoes—lingerie. A wardrobe that might have belonged to a princess.

She refused to go ashore. Not for worlds would she have again visited that city where she and Gene had stopped overnight—was it scarcely a month ago?

"I'd rather stay on the yacht, father," she told the indulgent parent, who was never far from her side. His "wonder girl," he called her. Nothing in the universe was good enough for Joy, the child of his boyhood love.

But he did worry over her silence concerning whom she had been visiting in Virginia, although he refrained from questioning her.

"Don't you think you'd better drop those people a note, darling?" he ventured, on the morning they were to sail north. "No matter how they've treated you, we owe them that courtesy."

Joy agreed with him, and promised to write at once. She did manage a short explanatory letter to Gene, telling him how she had learned of her father being so near, and how she had tried to row out to his yacht. She ended with the assurance that he might free himself from her in any way he wished, and signed the letter, "Joyce Marston."

A messenger boy coming aboard just before they sailed, with telegrams for Trenholm Marston, was given the letter to mail. The fact that the boy lost it before he could fulfill his mission was just another move on the part of Fate. Fate, whose busy fingers were still working with the destinies of Joyce Marston and Eugene Fairfax!

SIXTEEN months had gone by since that April night of Joy's rescue by her father. You would never have recognized the slim, stately young lady who descended the stone steps of a handsome mansion that August afternoon and gayly waved her hand at the driver of a big sedan at the curb.

"Did I keep you waiting long, Daddikins?" she laughed. "Couldn't help it. I thought I'd never get rid of Dick Jennings, the silly pest. No, move over to the other side of the seat," imperatively. "I'm going to drive to-day."

Trenholm Marston slid from behind the wheel, sighing with mock resignation.

"What a terrible thing it is to be ordered around," he said lugubriously. "Not even allowed to run my own car."

"You know you love me to drive," Joy retorted. "I like the feel of a powerful engine under my hands, too. My roadster is a plaything beside this car. Think I'll trade it in for a Packard coupé. Mind if I do?"

Mind! She could have demanded the stars, and her devoted father would certainly have moved the heavens to get them for her.

"How about Richard Jennings, honey?" he suddenly asked. "He's trying to steal my girl, I know. In fact, everybody in Baltimore knows it, ever since you came out. Nice lad, but I'm not ready just yet to give you up—"

"Don't talk about such things, please, daddy," Joy cut in sharply. "I'm never going to marry any one. Certainly wouldn't choose Dick, even if I thought of—things like that. Where are we going this afternoon?"

"Why aren't you ever going to marry, darling?" persisted her father, his keen glance searching her clear-cut profile. "Is there—Joy, did you care very much for that chap back in Virginia?"

"Yes, daddy," very low. The color faded from her cheeks.

"Going to tell me all about it some time?" he persisted.

"Maybe—yes, I will, daddy I—you ought to know—lots of things, but I—couldn't talk about them before. Maybe I'll tell you to-night. Which way must I drive? You said something about wanting to visit a new development somewhere."

"Cut through Guilford, darling, and take the boulevard till we reach Gitting Avenue, then turn right. I'll show you what to do then."

HE leaned back comfortably, studying a blue print. Now and then his eyes were raised to watch the dexterous driving of his daughter, who was utterly unconscious of his scrutiny.

Her thoughts were far away. Down in Virginia. With Gene. Gene, who no doubt had married Marion Ambler long ago.

Joy wondered what her father would say when he learned the truth. Why, she was a divorced woman! Of course, Gene had long ago got a divorce, she thought, with utter ignorance of the laws governing such things.

Daddy hated divorces. Would he be angry when he heard? Why hadn't she ever told him before? Maybe because there were so many surprises in her life.

There had been a course at a finishing school—not a boarding school, however. Trenholm Marston refused to let her out of his sight overnight. Then there had been so many friends of her father, all kindly, gracious women and men, glad to entertain her, glad to introduce her to their sons and daughters.

But Joy had never forgotten. The wound in her heart had not healed. The pain was numbed, of course. Time did that. But just to think of Gene was still a painful ordeal. She wondered whether they would ever meet again. Would he know her if they did?

She had changed so much, she thought with a feeling of pride. Not now would she be guilty of the mistakes in speech which had once grated upon her young husband's sensitive ears.

Her husband! How strange to think she'd been married.

"Turn in here, darling," reminded her father. "Your thoughts are woolgathering, Miss Marston. I'll have to employ another chauffeur. Here we are—just ahead. Don't drive into that unpaved road. Wait right here, dear. I've got an appointment with some men farther on. I'll be back in half an hour."

She watched his broad-shouldered, rather stocky figure out of sight. Dear daddy. He'd be shocked when she did tell him the whole truth. She wished Gene could have known that wonderful father. Then caught her breath at the thought, Gene would never have loved her, no matter who she was.

"Will you please direct me to the Warrendale development?" asked a voice directly beside the open car window. "I seem to have lost my way."

She turned around with a smile.

"It's directly ahead—" she began, then stopped short, her hand going to her open mouth, her eyes wide.

She was staring into a pair of blue eyes belonging to a tall, thin-faced man. Into the eyes of Eugene Fairfax, her one-time husband!

"Gene—you?" she jerked out. "How did—you—get here?"

THERE was no answer. A pallor had spread over that too-thin face which looked as if it belonged to a person who'd long been ill. His hands grasped the window frame. His body swayed slightly. A long moment of silence, then:

"It can't be—Joy," he muttered, like a man in a hypnotic state. "I'm seeing things. I must be losing my mind. She—Joy is dead."

His condition alarmed Joy She reached out and touched him.

"You didn't think that, Gene," she said, almost in a whisper. "You couldn't! I wrote you from Norfolk that I was with my father. That night—I rowed out to his yacht—or tried to. The boat leaked. I nearly drowned—Didn't you get my letter, Gene?"

"No letter." He was still dazed. "Is it really you, Joy? My Joy? My wife, whom I've mourned all these months, alive?"

"Mourned? You mourned for me?" incredulously. "Why, I heard you say you—you loved her—Marion Ambler, you know. I've been thinking all along that you and she were married—"

"You couldn't have heard all I said," Gene broke in. He was over his first shock now. "Oh, Joy, darling, darling! If you only knew how I've suffered—calling myself a murderer—looking for you everywhere, wanting to ask your forgiveness on my knees, to tell you I worshiped the very ground you trod upon—then to think of you as drowned—"

His head went down on the window frame. The next moment he was weeping as only strong men can weep when tried beyond endurance.

In an instant the other door was flung wide. There was a flutter of green draperies, and Joy rushed around the car. Her arms went out, closing themselves about his neck.

"Gene—my Gene!" she kept repeating. "My Gene! Oh, I love you, love you, *love* you! I've always loved you. Speak to me, dearest! Don't—don't give way like this. Feel my hands, touch me! I'm alive, dear. I believe you still think I'm a ghost," she added with a nervous little laugh.

His arms reached out blindly. His lips closed down upon hers like those of a perishing man who has at last found water to give him life.

"My little Joy, my own wife," he breathed hoarsely. "Tell me all—everything. Begin at the beginning and don't stop till I know the whole miraculous story."

AND there on that deserted roadside, locked in each other's arms, oblivious of any one who might pass, Joy did begin at the beginning and go through to the end.

Then he took up the thread of conversation, telling her in broken tones of that terrible night, so many months ago. Of their grief, their search, their final giving up of hope.

"Dad will be almost as happy as I am—he loved you, Joy."

"I love him, too," she said softly, tears misting her eyes. "Dear old colonel. I want my father to know him. But what were you doing here, Gene? You—asked where the Warrendale development is located. Why, it belongs to my father, and you—"

"I'm the engineer sent here to survey the tract of land," he told her. "Warrendale Development Company was all I knew—Joy, isn't it the strangest thing in the world how fate works things out and brings happiness?"

His lips closed down on hers again. Finally he lifted his head, and for the first time in many months his boyish laugh rang out.

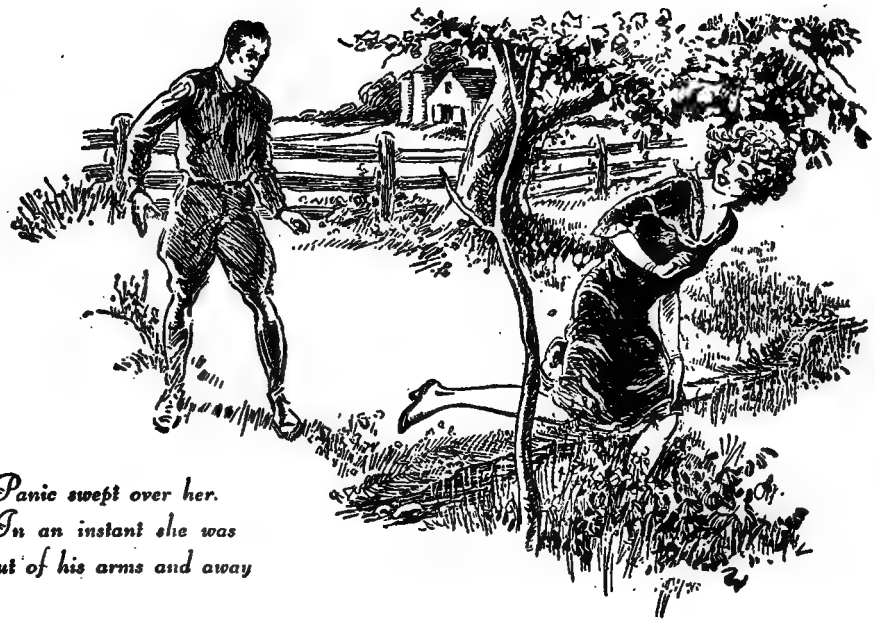
"Let's go in search of your daddy right now," he cried gayly. "I'll tell him I came for a job and found an angel at the very gates! Warrendale Development? I'm going to call the place Gene's Paradise!"

Love's New Year

MARRIED! Oh, my dearest—
Married to you!
The sweetest dream in all the world
Come true!

Just we two together—
I love you so—
Watching the New Year come,
The Old Year go!

—*Winifred Virginia Jackson.*



Panic swept over her. In an instant she was out of his arms and away

The Road Back Home

A girl's wayward feet trod the road to fame and glory, but all the time her heart was luring her along another road—the road to love

By DuVernet Rabell

BRETTA VAN HORN never even heard the bushes rustle when Nick Deering came up behind her. Like most big men of an outdoor type, Nick moved through the woods like a panther. Bretta had come down the brook that ran along the edge of the lower pasture to see if the sunshine of early May had coaxed out the watercress. She had come down for that and to think something out.

At first, when Nick's arms closed around her, when he swung her to her feet and kissed her, a long, slow, hard kiss, she didn't struggle. Her arm even slipped up a fraction of the way toward his neck. Then she stiffened and beat both small fists against the flannel of his shirt.

"Nick—Nick—" she panted. "Stop that—please stop—why, whatever has come over you?"

He didn't release her, just swung her back in his arms and gave her a quick shake. "Bretta, you know very well what's come over me. Ever since you came back from school you have tormented me to death—I think you like to see me squirm!"

Bretta smiled up at him, wrinkling her short, impudent nose. "Catch you ever squirming! Let me go, Nick."

Nick, staring at her intently, narrowed his eyes—it made him look very primitive. "You don't want me to kiss you?"

Bretta folded her hands tight together, looked down at them, and then up at Nick. "Well—you see—"

He took her back into his arms. "Bretta, put your soft warm arms around my neck and kiss me! Please do—you know how I feel about you. I love you, I want you to marry me—I've always wanted it since you were a little bit of a girl and I used to drag you to school on a red sled."

Surprisingly, Bretta did as he asked. And she was as much surprised as Nick could have been when she clasped her hands back of his head, stood on tiptoe, and raised her rosy, three-cornered little face.

Then quickly she pulled free, her eyes brimming with tears. "Oh, dear, why did I do that? It makes things so much harder."

"What things?" Nick demanded.

"The things I am going to say, that I have to say. Sit down, Nick; sit over there on that stone. No, don't hold me—I can't—it's hard—I have to think—"

Nick sat down on the rock and unclenched her fingers. "Well, all right. Get whatever is on it off your mind, and then we'll arrive at the real business of the morning. And, gee, Bretta, what a morning—sunshine, and a warm wind, the new sap running—and birds—"

BRETTA looked down at him, a softening, a maternal softening in her eyes. "You love it around here, don't you, Nick?"

"It's my home," he answered simply, and added, "it's your home, too—your folks and my folks settled this valley one hundred and seventy years ago."

"I know—and things are just the same as they were then." There was a note of desperation in her voice.

Nick looked off across his fields. Two tractors barked and rattled as they dragged behind them the lurching harrows; a Delco plant hummed at the turn of the stream. Nick shook his head. "Oh, no, Bretta, things have changed a lot."

"Outside things," she answered; "but we all still think alike, are alike inside. No, wait Nick, I'm going to get this out. Ever since I came back from school I've felt—felt trapped. I live in the same house my great-great-grandmother lived in, I use her furniture—even the quilt on my bed with the pine tree pattern; my mother uses her churn, she even uses her cookie-cutter. We go to the same church, I went to the same little stone schoolhouse in the hollow. Why, we even—" Then she stopped, and the color stole

up over her round cheeks, and her blue eyes filled with confusion.

"Are you afraid to say it?" Nick teased. "You even marry into the same family. Every so often a Van Horn girl marries a Deering, or a Deering girl marries a Van Horn. It's a good habit, too—makes fine stock."

"Oh, you're old-fashioned," Bretta sighed.

"What of it? I'm old-fashioned in love, too — I've never loved but one girl. Bretta, honey, I know I can make you happy."

BRETTA clasped her hands. "But Nick, could I make you happy feeling the way I do? With this urge deep down in me to go out and see the world; boys have it, why shouldn't girls? Why must girls always stay home, never go anywhere, see anything, *do* anything? Oh, Nick, sometimes when those folders come through the mail, telling about the trips people take nowadays, to far off countries, with wonderful pictures on every page, my feet just somehow want to run—run!"

Nick's quiet eyes looked out across the hills, golden in the morning sunshine. "What other place in the world could be as beautiful as this valley?"

Bretta smiled wistfully. "But, Nick—dear—

> "How shall I know, unless I go
> To Cairo and Cathay,
> Whether or not this blessed spot
> Is blessed in every way?
>
> "The fabric of my faithful love
> No power shall dim or ravel,
> Whilst I stay here—but, oh, my dear,
> If I should ever travel!"

Nick caught her soft shoulder roughly. "That's smarty-smarty talk. Now listen to me, Bretta—"

Panic swept over her. She didn't dare listen; she wanted to, far too much. "I won't—I can't—" she declared tearfully, and before his fingers could tighten, she was over the brook and flying across the fields.

Nick Deering was not the man to run after any girl, literally or otherwise. So now, after looking a long time after the small, flying figure, looking with an odd, tender, understanding smile on his rather stern young mouth, he turned, and cut back through the woods to his plowing.

BRETTA ran through the kitchen where her mother was helping old Martha with the weekly baking, and up the narrow back stairs to her own room. She closed the door behind her and went up to the old mirror with the coaching scene painted on the lower panel.

"Run," she advised herself in a small scared voice; "run, Bretta Van Horn, while you can! Pretty soon, if you do much more fussing around the kitchen, if you hem many more napkins for your hope chest, this place will get you. And if—"

Again the warm crimson flooded her face, it seemed to come right up from her heart the way it had started to beat.

"And if Nick Deering ever kisses you again, ever holds you again—well, he'll *surely* get you. And then you'll be 'got' for good, Bretta Van Horn. Nick would never let go of anything that belonged to him."

She glanced at the banjo clock that hung over her chest. She could make the twelve o'clock train to New York. She sat down at her desk and wrote a note to her mother. She started to write one to Nick Deering, but somehow found she couldn't. Nick Deer-

ing was not a man you explained things to—not if you were trying to explain something he didn't want you to do.

She opened her mother's letter and added a postscript.

"I'll write you, mother dear, from New York. Don't worry. I have plenty of money, and I'll get a position right away. And mother, tell Nick I've gone—tell him I've gone for good. And please, mother, love me, because even if I am running away to try my wings, I love you better," she stopped and considered this before she dashed on: "I love you better than all the world."

BRETTA was hurrying along the narrow, dusty road that cut off a quarter of a mile to the railroad station, when she came upon a battered car whose driver was hanging solicitously over the engine.

Bretta was a friendly soul. She stopped. "Engine trouble?" she asked.

A young, sandy haired man, with a crooked smile and quizzical eyebrows over gray eyes, emerged from the hood. "I don't know," he answered querulously. "I bought this car because I understood it was fool-proof. I understood it practically ran itself. I have to have a free mind for my work—you must understand that—I have to go driving through God's sweet outdoors, letting inspiration flow into me from the birds, the trees, the scent of the flowers. And this car is always sliding into the ditch, running into things—or just lying down. What do you think is the matter with it?"

Bretta had listened to all this with eyes growing wider and wider. Was this young man drunk, or was he crazy? Should she have stopped? Then her fears were lulled by the very real helplessness in his expression.

"I drive a car like this, use it to deliver eggs," she said. "Let me see." She bent over the engine, and then laughed. "Oh, it's nothing—see, just this little wire is loose. Start your engine, it's all right now."

The young man gazed at her in awe. "My word—a little thing like you taming this brute! But look at your hands—and you have a smudge across your nose. It's a nice nose, too, straight, with just enough of a tilt to denote humor."

Bretta looked ruefully down at her hands. "Oh, dear, I *am* a mess!" Then she laughed up at him. "I don't look much like a young lady going forth to make her fortune in the great city."

Her companion looked interested. "Was that where you were bound for?"

Bretta nodded, and then quickly raised her head. A whistle sounded from over the hill.

She sat down dejectedly upon the running board. This is surely my unlucky day. There goes my train."

The young man started his engine and briskly swung open the door. "Don't worry, I'm on my way back to town, and I'll drive you in."

Bretta looked up at him doubtfully. "My mother doesn't allow me to hitchhike."

He grinned down at her. "I'm not dangerous. I loathe girls, and I wouldn't pet on a bet."

Bretta laughed and got into the car. After a minute she asked: "Why do you loathe girls?"

"See too many of them. I'm in the girl business."

"The girl business?"

"I write Hemingway's shows."

"Who is Hemingway, and what kind of shows do you write?"

The young man stared down at her unbelievingly. "You don't know Hemingway—or his shows? My dear girl, what a hick you are! Why, Hemingway is the biggest producer in this country—he puts on girl shows. I write 'em. And I'm telling you at this time and place that I'm jolly well sick of it all! I get that way about things. I think I'll trek West this very day, and leave 'em all flat!" He drew a deep breath. "Now, go on and tell me *your* plans."

BRETTA dragged her hypnotized eyes away from his face. "Well, I really haven't any plans. I'm just going to New York to earn my living."

"Doing what?"

"I don't know."

"Got a job?"

"Not yet, but—"

"Got any money?"

"Yes—"

"How much?"

"Oh, a lot. I have one hundred with me, and two hundred in the bank."

"Last you about two months." He stopped the car. "Go on, get out and go home. You don't belong in New York."

Bretta looked at him anxiously. "How do you know?"

He leaned back and stuck his fingers in the armholes of his vest. "I'm Bert Steel—I know everything. New York is a town for experts—not beginners. Hit it after you've 'arrived.' And you must have genius to arrive—talent. I'm crazy, but I've got genius."

Bretta's little Dutch chin set with soft stubbornness. "I don't care—I must go." Then, obeying an irresistible impulse, she looked earnestly up into his face and began to talk to him about her home. She told him about the quaint old valley, its age-old customs; she explained how she loved it all, and yet felt she must go away—if only for a little while.

As she talked something seemed to happen to the gray eyes above her. They grew lighter, brighter, rapt. Bert Steel's lips began to move rapidly. His hand shot out and closed on Bretta's wrist.

"Don't say any more," he begged in a tense whisper; "you've said enough—just enough."

Minute after minute passed.

Bretta was scared to death; she didn't dare move. After a bit she glanced fearfully at the clock on the dash. Almost an hour had gone—how long were they going to sit here?

Then, as abruptly as it had begun, Bert came out of it. He tossed a lank strand of hair out of his eyes and laughed, high, excited laughter.

"I've got it! She's back, the Muse, after deserting me for months—hasn't handed me out one idea—and then you come along. Maybe the old girl was jealous. Yep, I've got it!" he chanted exultantly. "The plot, the songs, even the lighting effects, and the costumes—it's a wow! Gilbert Terlain has been after me for months to break with Hemingway and give him a chance at a show of mine—and here it is!"

The engine shot into first, second, third, and the battered old car took the road like a mangy pup hitting it for home.

BRETTA hung on to the seat and wondered if she was going to reach New York alive.

On the ferry Bert turned to her. "I'm calling this show 'Cherry Lane,'

it's a rural thing—girls in sunbonnets —cherry blossom set—boys in the lane singing love songs with the moon silvering down on 'em — great stuff! Hasn't been done in years. And don't worry about yourself any more. I'll find something for you in the show."

"But I don't know a thing about the stage," Bretta demurred.

"Don't want you to. I've got an idea for a song for you—pink gingham—can you sing at all?"

"A little, but I don't think—"

"Show girls don't think—ever. You've got a mouth like a pansy, good legs, nice hair—it's long, isn't it? Well, here we are, in Gotham Town. Where do I drop you?"

Bretta didn't know, so Bert Steel suggested a small hotel, and when they arrived there, he went in and arranged with the clerk for a room.

When he left, he said: "Now, go out and see the town, museums, the aquarium, the Statue of Liberty—anything the rubberneck man suggests. But get it all done this month, because next month you'll be too busy — I'm going to get 'Cherry Lane' open by the last of June, if it takes a leg."

GILBERT TERLAIN was a man of wealth, leisure, and a keen interest in the theater. He'd always wanted to put on a show, but he was no "butter and egg man," he wasn't going to back a failure. He wanted a top-notcher like Bert Steel to write his show; this erratic young genius who'd made millions for Hemingway.

As work on "Cherry Lane" progressed, Bert did more and more talking about Bretta Van Horn. He had decided to give her one of the best songs in the show—a song sure to be played, sung and whistled around New York for months. It was called "The Road Back Home."

"But," Terlain objected, "this girl has had no experience. You say yourself she's a little rube; you can't risk putting that song into her hands."

"Yes, I can," Bert told him. "I'm going to keep it very simple. She has a sweet, true voice, a clear, ingenuous soprano, and I'm having her taught half a dozen dance steps—nothing complicated. She'll do it all right—she'll be something new."

But Terlain, who was pretty shrewd, still protested. "It's the big song of the show—at least it ought to be."

"I'll tell you," Bert offered. "I'll take you over to see her to-night. I'm right. Give her the once-over, and you'll admit it."

Gil Terlain liked a pretty face, even though he'd seen plenty of them. He liked enthusiasm, and he loved youth—and not too much experience.

Bretta had conscientiously followed Bert Steel's instructions. She had done her Manhattan sight-seeing, something she had never done before, even though she had been born and brought up less than a hundred miles from New York. She took dancing lessons, and she walked in the park; she ate simple food, and she went to bed early, as Bert told her to. But she was beginning to get pretty lonesome when he telephoned and told her that he was bringing a friend around.

Gilbert Terlain liked to keep his well-turned-out self in the public eye. He had his car, and the three of them drove up the river to a smart inn for dinner and to dance.

Bretta had never been in such a place, and was all eyes. She was very excited about the dinner that Gil ordered: frogs' legs, potatoes disguised so that she never would have recog-

nized them, heart of the palm salad, and frozen fruit for dessert. She drank two cocktails and chattered like a magpie. She danced with Bert and she danced with Gil.

Bert nodded his head at her. "You dance well—you are nicely put together."

Gil's heavily lidded eyes met Bretta's. "Now what a thing to say about Miss Van Horn's dancing!"

"Well," Bert demanded, "what would you say about it?"

Gil considered his beautifully manicured nails. Then he leaned close to look into Bretta's young, wonder-filled eyes.

"I'd say that Bretta's dancing — and I may call you Bretta? —was a willow in the wind, melody tripping to a tune."

Bert grunted, but Bretta tilted up her pansy mouth and laughed delightedly. "I like your way much better—even if it isn't true."

OF course Bretta was bound to see more and more of Gil Terlain as the time drew near for the opening of "Cherry Lane." This gentleman had executed a right-about-face concerning Bretta's ability, and now he was urging Bert to give her another song, a few lines, a dance number. Bert wouldn't agree to this.

But—a week before the opening, Lillian Dorrell had a falling out with him. Her "boy friend" urged her to take no back talk, with the result that one midnight, when one of the big liners drew out of her slip, Lillian was a last-minute passenger.

Bert tore his sandy hair and danced

Bretta turned from him while she hardened her heart

a frenzied fandango in Gil's apartment. Gil was all suavity and consolation.

"You don't need to get all 'het up' about Dorrell—she's getting to be an old tale on Broadway. I didn't think so much of her in this show. In that 'Moonbeams and Cherry Blossoms' number she was rotten."

"Yes, but whom can we get now—at this date?" Bert wailed.

"Put in Bretta Van Horn."

Bert stared at him. "She couldn't do it."

"She certainly could."

Bert came to sit on the edge of the table in front of Terlain. "Now, listen, Gil, this kid from the sticks has

given you a hard tumble, but that doesn't make her good enough for a big part in my show."

"Our show," Gil corrected him.

Bert held his head. "My very heart is in the show—"

"And my money is in it," Gil cut in, in the same gentle tone.

Bert raved and argued, he threw himself down on the piano bench and pounded out wild melodies, he paced the floor and he drank highballs.

Finally, Gil said: "Will you give her a chance?"

Bert tossed his arms to heaven. "You win, I'd give a performing poodle that."

Gil got Bretta on the wire, and then went around to see her.

"You must make good," he pleaded. "I know you can, and you must."

Bretta raised grateful blue eyes. "I'll make good if it's in me. I'll make good for you, Mr. Terlain."

"No, not for me," Terlain said urgently, "for yourself. I'm older than Bert, Bretta; I've known the theater for twenty years. I know headline material when I see it. You have every qualification for success—you are not superlatively anything, but you have charm, appeal. In another year, two years, three years—your name will be up in lights over the entrance."

Bretta slipped her hands in his. "I don't know which one to thank most, you or Bert."

Gil Terlain was wise. He never rushed a girl, a young girl, off her feet. And he never took little, when by waiting he could get more. He said now: "You don't need to thank anybody. Of course we gave you your chance, but the ability to make good is a gift you were born with."

Bretta shook her head. "It seems too wonderful to be really happening. Happening to *me*—to whom *nothing* ever happened. And everybody has been so good to me. You and Bert—why, I never had such friends. Bert has been so patient, he has taught me so much. And you— Oh, Gil, you've shown me the glitter, the glamour, the thing that is really New York." She looked troubled. "I suppose I should be more grateful to Bert, but—"

Gil grew grave. "Please don't stop there."

Bretta felt it was time to free her hands from his hot, moist clasp. "I must—really, I've forgotten just what I was going to say."

"Try to remember."

Bretta laughed up at him, impishly, to hide her embarrassment.

"Well," she finished gayly, "maybe I was going to say I liked you a lot—you've been a big brother to me."

And Gil Terlain, although he made a wry face, had to be content with this. Content, that is, for the present.

"CHERRY LANE" was a success. It had everything that made for a riot of a summer show in New York. Lovely girls, tuneful music that invited singing and whistling, gorgeous scenery, a popular English comedian, and many novelty numbers.

Nobody can prophesy the type of girl the New York theater-going public will go crazy about, nor why they will go crazy, but the town, and the visiting public, certainly fell for Bretta Van Horn. She stepped into her part and went through with it as if she had been born in the wings of a theater. Bert gave her a new song, and later let her sing it at one of the most fashionable and expensive night clubs that had recently opened on Long Island. Gil used to call for her every night after the show and drive her out.

One night she kept him waiting. He sat in his car for almost an hour before finally she came out of the stage door.

Bretta had had a visitor.

Nick Deering had come to New York, had stopped overnight so that he could see "Cherry Lane," and had sent a note around asking if he might see Bretta.

It was the first word Bretta had had from her home for months. Her mother had written her a heartbroken, reproachful letter, but Nick hadn't sent her a line. There had been a box of blue delphiniums and Madonna lilies the night the show opened, with no card; she had hoped these might be from Nick, but when she thought it over she didn't really believe they were —the florist shops were full of delphiniums and lilies at this season.

Now here was Nick leaning against her dressing table, and looking quizzically down at her. Bretta was glad she had taken off her make-up. Somehow, she would rather Nick saw her with her face clean.

"Well?" Nick inquired.

Bretta felt oddly irritated. She didn't exactly know why she should, but Nick was so—so casual. He ought to have been impressed, at least a little impressed, and here he had hardly even glanced at the flowers that every night banked her dressing room.

"Well what?" she asked.

"Well, now that you've had your fun," Nick said, half smiling; "now that you've seen—what were the places? — Cathay and Cairo, are you planning to come home?"

BRETTA drew back. "Come home —you mean back to Bright Brook?"

"Why, yes"—Nick's voice was deceptively even — "where else would I mean? It is your home, too, isn't it? It has been the home of your kin for five generations."

Bretta leaned back in her chair, nervously twisting a ribbon around her finger. "Nick, can't you understand? You stand there all rigged up in evening clothes, looking just like a New Yorker; you're tanned, but you look like a successful broker who gets in lots of golf. Anybody would take you for a product of New York. But—"

"But I belong in Bright Brook," Nick finished for her.

"Well, I don't," Bretta said decidedly; but she avoided his steady eyes.

Nick took up a rouge pot and gravely read the label. Then he replaced it gently on the ornate little table.

"Bretta," he said, "don't you know that what we are is much stronger than what we want to be? You are a little Dutch girl from a farming community, and you want to be—just what do you want to be?"

"Just what I am. The girl who sings 'The Road Back Home' in the biggest hit of this season."

Oh, she wished she could feel coldly angry; instead she wanted to cry.

"And how long before another hit comes along? New York gets tired of things mighty fast, Bretta. Right now you're giving them something they want—but soon they'll want something else. And Bretta, you have character, personality, you are a somebody—you can't change yourself, keep changing, to suit the changing taste of New York."

"Yes, I can. I have given my audiences something they want—and I can go right on doing it. I'm just beginning; I've all the time in the world ahead of me. My name will mean more every year—managers will fight to get it on a contract. I'm a success

now—but watch me two years from now. Nobody knows what makes for fame, what puts a girl on top, but whatever it is, I've got it. Make no mistake about that, Nick Deering."

Nick Deering smiled his slow smile. "Oh, I'm not making any mistake about it, Bretta. I've always known all the things about you that you've just told me; but part of this charm you are talking about lay in the fact that you didn't know you had it. Who is the misguided friend who has told you? The gentleman with the flat eyelids who is lolling in that expensive looking cream colored car outside?"

Bretta flared. "That's Gil Terlain—he's the best friend I ever had!"

Nick caught her wrist. He jerked her up from her chair and pulled her close to him. There was no gentleness, no tenderness in his clasp. His fingers were like steel, and when she made herself look up into his eyes, despite the blaze in them she shivered.

"You little fool!" Nick said, in a low, deadly voice. "Don't you know you are dancing on the edge of an inferno? Don't you use your head? Can't you think?"

BRETTA tried to conquer her fear of this new Nick. She laughed shakily. "You once said you didn't want me to think—"

"That was a thousand years ago."

"Yes, and every one of those years has made me something different," Bretta said in a low tone.

Nick released her so sharply that she swayed, but he made no move to catch her. "You haven't changed—not really, Bretta; say you haven't." His hand, with its strong, lean, brown fingers, touched her hair, a fugitive caress. "Why, Bretta, I thought you were just a little girl, playing—I wanted you to play—it was like letting you go to a party. I didn't really believe you had changed—not deep inside."

Bretta's heart was beating, it was beating high up in her throat, and something soft, yielding, was rising within her, like a warm, sweet tide. She must do something—do something quick.

She turned and smeared a streak of red across her pretty mouth. She hardened her chin—and her heart. "Nick, I haven't changed. Only I never was the girl you thought I was—you made me up, you made up a girl you wanted to fall in love with. You don't love me, you never did—"

"Just a minute. I would prefer not to discuss what I felt for you, with a—with a perfect stranger. That is what you are trying to convey to me that you are, isn't it?" He picked up his soft gray hat and walked toward the door. Then he turned. "But you have made one mistake—against the many I have made—you say that I never loved you. I did—once."

And the door closed with terrible finality.

BRETTA VAN HORN danced very badly that night. Her accompanist nearly went mad trying to follow her. Even Gil protested: "What on earth is the matter with you, Bretta?"

Bretta wearily pushed the hair back from her hot forehead. "I guess it's the heat. And sometimes—I get so tired—of dancing—of people."

Gil took her hand. "I know, Bretta. Why not give it up—don't go on through the winter—it's too much."

They were driving home through a moon-drenched night, and Bretta looked out of the car window at the silvered landscape flying by.

That's the way life was, flying by, flying by. It wasn't any use putting out your hand to stop anything. And when you lost a thing, you lost it forever, things that used to make you happy, people you cared for—love—memories—no, you didn't lose memories! Bretta wished, wished with a sick sort of desperateness, that you did.

"CHERRY LANE" ran for a year and a half in New York, and then sold to the Nation-Wide Moving Picture Corporation for a staggering sum. Bretta had been interested in the negotiations, and rejoiced whole-heartedly with Bert Steel when after many haggling weeks he finally got his price.

"Of course I've never done any moving picture work," she told him happily, "but I don't think the technique is going to be hard for me to master."

Bert Steel looked at her quickly. "But, Bretta, you aren't going to have the part of Annette in the moving picture production."

For a moment Bretta could only stare at him. "What do you mean?"

Bert shrugged. "I thought you knew all along that the Nation-Wide people bought the show for Dolly Devigne."

"Dolly Devigne! Can she sing—can she dance?"

"Sure she can—or she'll be taught."

Of course Bretta was bitterly disappointed. But, after all, as she had played the part of Annette a good many weeks, she was beginning to grow tired of it, and wish she had something new. She explained all this to Bert one day when he had run in for a cup of tea.

"I suppose you'll be starting on a new show any day now?" she said to him. "We'll take the flivver and go out into the country for inspiration."

Bert shook his head.

"No, I'm going out to Hollywood, signed a contract this morning. I don't know whether I'll like it or not, but when those babies on the coast get talking cash they talk so loud you've just got to listen. The break will be a good thing for me, too—you don't run 'em off two in a line like 'Cherry Lane.'"

Bretta felt rather blank—lost. "But Bert," she said, "I don't want to wait around until you take your pen in hand."

Bert scratched his head. "Well, Hemingway is putting on a show—he likes you, go on over and see him. And Duke Weight wants a girl of your type to team with him on the southern circuit."

"Oh, I wouldn't like vaudeville!"

"Well"—Bert prepared to leave—"you'll get something — only, kid, don't be too choosy."

THIS was good and well meant advice, and Bretta should have followed it. But she didn't.

She had quite a scene with Hemingway over the part he was able to offer her, and left his office with the air of an offended duchess. She saw two or three other producers, and had a couple of fairly good offers, but she turned them down because her part wasn't big enough. In the end the season started, and Bretta had nothing.

She didn't care so much. She'd saved some money, she was tired, and after playing around New York—mostly with Gil Terlain—until Christmas, she went on a cruise to the West Indies.

She couldn't face the thought of spending Christmas in New York. The holiday season brought too many pic-

tures before her mind — snow-covered hillsides. Christmas trees in old, low-raftered living rooms, children singing Christmas carols to the accompaniment of sleigh bells and church chimes.

In spring the summer shows began to be talked of. She put aside her pride and went in to see Hemingway; then she wrote to the Potter Brothers, and to two or three others who were putting on shows. They were all casting, but seemingly there was nothing for Bretta Van Horn.

Bert Steel, on one of his flying trips to New York, heard all this from Gil Terlain. He explained it at once.

"She could do just the stuff I wrote for her, that's all, and they aren't doing that this year—they can't; nobody can imitate me. They are putting on these musical-crook shows — Bretta's no good for those. She does the simple country-maiden stuff, and that's 'out'—for now, anyhow."

By September Bretta was panic-stricken. She was willing to take anything then, and she was nearly flat broke.

"Oh, you'll get something," Gil Terlain consoled her. "To-day what you need is cheering up. Let's go out in the country somewhere for luncheon."

But Bretta didn't cheer up. She had lost all of her sunny self-confidence. Her success in "Cherry Lane" seemed a dream she had had a long time ago.

On the way home she began to cry; discouraged, disillusioned, desperate tears.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," she sobbed.

"Listen, Bretta," Terlain said, "what you want, as I understand it, is a play like 'Cherry Lane.'"

Bretta lifted a tear-stained face. "Oh, Gil, I'd love that, of course, but I'll take anything."

"You can't do anything." Then Gil told her just what Bert Steel had said about her.

Bretta slipped her hand into his

BRETTA seemed to wilt as he talked, like a rose some one has stepped on. "Then" she faltered. "I really haven't any talent —my little success was an accident, a flare in the pan. But, Gil, I'm young, I'm as pretty as dozens of girls who get along. I've—I've just lost something, that's all."

"No, you haven't," Gil said quietly, "you still have your great gift—but you lack the opportunity to use it. You are like a jewel without the proper setting."

"I don't know exactly what you mean," Bretta faltered. "I know Bert Steel did everything for me, that he created the part of Annette around me—"

"The part of Annette!" Gil echoed

impatiently. "That's it—it was a part, imitation—but Bretta, I can give you the real thing."

Bretta made a helpless little gesture. "I'm so tired I'm stupid—I don't understand you."

"You must. Why, Bretta, I'm in love with you—I want you to marry me. I'll give you everything in the world. A beautiful rambling house in the country, a garden where every rare flower will grow, a fountain where a silver stream will sing to you all day long, a rose garden with a marble bench for you to sit on in the moonlight, paths with crystal pebbles to shine as bright as your eyes, servants to wait on you — Bretta, Bretta, my dear, I can give you everything!"

Bretta looked up at him dazedly. "It sounds that way—sounds unreal—"

"No, it isn't unreal. Just tell me that you'll marry me, and we'll flit away for a golden honeymoon in the yacht. I'll show you every wonder the world has to offer; the Taj Mahal, the lakes of Scotland, the Alhambra in June, the beauty of far Cathay—"

He went on talking, but Bretta heard not another word. As under a wand, her whole expression changed, her vision cleared.

The things this man was offering her were wonderful, but to her suddenly, when she heard them put into words, they had no value. She didn't want a magnificent country estate, she wanted an old Dutch pudding stone house with a garden dooryard; not rare flowers, but hollyhocks and zinnias; she didn't want roses in neat beds, she wanted them climbing over a rustic gate; she didn't want tended paths — she didn't want — why, she didn't want to go to "far Cathay"! How this last brought back that May day, the brook, Nick Deering!

"Gil," she said, "stop—I can't marry you—"

For an instant he stared down at her, speechless. "But, Bretta — there is no wish I couldn't grant—"

"I know," Bretta nodded, "it sounds like a fairy tale—but you are not the prince. Some day—"

But the next minute it looked as if there would never be a "some day" for little Bretta Van Horn. There was a confused shouting, a grinding of brakes, splintering wood, and a long, long drop. Then black silence.

BRETTA VAN HORN was conscious, but she felt no desire to open her eyes. When you kept your eyes closed your dreams seemed real, you were happy, people—people you cared for—were near you.

But soon her thoughts began to run around like white mice in a cage, and she weakly tried to catch them. They eluded her, went on scampering round and round, each with a little question —what was this terrible pain in her back—where was she—what had happened to her—why was everything white—

"Open your eyes, child."

And Bretta opened her eyes to look up into a keen, smooth-shaven face with a kind mouth, and eyes that somehow looked as if they had seen into the nooks and crannies of so many souls that they knew, and understood, and sympathized with the whole human family.

"How is everything?" he asked.

Bretta managed a twisted smile. "I seem to be here."

Dr. Cary lifted her wrist. "Just about. And you've been traveling some—brooks where watercress grows, a bird singing in a maple tree, fresh bread in the oven—"

Bretta shut her eyes and let go. Dr. Cary called sharply to the nurse. "She's gone out again."

The days drifted on—pain-filled days, ether-filled days, days that were just blanks. But finally Bretta was sitting propped up on two pillows and was sipping hot milk. She even thought she could hold the glass, but the smiling nurse wouldn't let her.

After a little she heard all about the accident that nearly cost her her life. They had skidded off a railroad bridge, a drop of fifty feet.

Then bit by bit Dr. Cary got the story of the last two years in New York, not asking any questions in particular, but somehow making Bretta want to talk. Then he went back further, and heard about the farm at Bright Brook, about the mother he mustn't send for—and finally he heard about Nick Deering. Just his name, Bretta couldn't go beyond that.

ONE day she asked Dr. Cary: "Why did you bring me back to life? I have nothing to live for."

Dr. Cary shook his iron-gray head. "The world is crisscrossed with roads for feet as young as yours to travel."

Bretta sighed. "I've traveled them all; at least I feel that way."

Dr. Cary lifted her hand. "My dear, there is one road left."

The girl lifted pain-shadowed eyes. "What road is that?"

"The road back home."

Bretta turned her head away.

Cary continued gravely: "My child, don't let false pride, foolish pride, keep you from taking it."

A tear rolled down Bretta's face. "Oh, Dr. Cary, it isn't pride; what have I to be proud of? It's the hopelessness of it—it's knowing that there is no one at the end who wants me. My mother, maybe—but—but—"

"The man you love—why don't you say it?" Cary asked sternly. "This Nick Deering—why, you've babbled about him continually for two weeks."

Bretta raised her hand and then let it drop back on the sheet. "But he doesn't love me any more. Oh, why did I kill such a perfect, priceless thing?"

"No perfect, priceless thing can be killed," Cary told her.

"If I had something to offer him," Bretta went on faintly. "If this had happened to me while I was riding on high, still playing in 'Cherry Lane,' still singing my song—oh, Dr. Cary, that song was called 'The Road Back Home.'"

"It's a good omen," Dr. Cary assured her.

Bretta hid her face in the pillow. "No, it's fate laughing at me."

But Dr. Nils Cary thought differently, and a few days later he took his car and went for a long drive in the country.

The next morning when he paid Bretta his usual visit, he talked in the most unprofessional manner.

"Why God made all women fools," he stormed, "is more than I can tell. The minute a woman falls in love she loses what little sense she was born with. My child, my child, don't you know that what a woman does means nothing to the man who really loves her, it's what she is that counts—counts, I mean, to a man like Nick Deering, one of your strong, silent men. He doesn't want a woman to do anything but love him enough—*enough*, I said."

Bretta didn't seem to be listening to him, her eyes were misty, and far away. "Yes—yes, Nick is like that—

strong, silent." Then—"But, oh, Dr. Cary, what would he think of me if I came creeping home now—when I had nowhere else to go?"

THERE was a knock on the door. Dr. Cary turned expectantly, but he frowned as a sandy-haired young man burst into the room.

"Why, Bert," Bretta tried to smile; "when did you get back?"

"Been back a week," Bert Steel answered. He went on to ask a question or two about Bretta, how she felt, was she better—then paused to fling a brief word of commiseration in Gil Terlain's direction.

"Heard he'd sailed for Europe as soon as he was up and about—going to take some nerve cure, sun cure, what have you. However, it doesn't matter. I'm going back to Hemingway—got a grand idea. Going to do a show with Holland as a background—tulips—windmills—canals—got a song for you—"

Dr. Cary shot Bretta a glance.

She propped herself up in bed. "Listen, Bert, you are awfully kind—I may take it—I may have to take it. But there is a road—what I mean is I'm considering something else—I may not get it—"

Bert was protesting fervently when he found himself out in the hall. Dr. Cary held his arm, and somebody pushed by him in the doorway—some man with broad shoulders and black eyes.

Bretta was looking out of the window. Not that there was much to see, just flat roofs and telegraph wires.

"Bretta—dear—"

Bretta closed her eyes quick—sweet, queer dreams like this faded at once, if you did not shut out the world right away.

But these long, brown hands couldn't be a dream, the feel of rough cloth against her cheek.

Her eyes flew open. "Nick—no, it can't be—yes! Oh, how did you know where I was—why did you come—"

Nick sat down on the edge of the bed. His arms were unbelievably gentle as he eased Bretta back against his shoulder.

"I've come to take you home," he said.

"But Nick," Bretta found herself gesturing with pale, thin, little hands. "I can't see why you want to. I'm not worth any trouble—I'm just nobody. I've failed, and failed—why, I couldn't even die when I wanted to. I thought I was so clever, so wonderful— When I think of how I bragged to you—"

Nick was smiling. "I will say you were some little braggart, Bretta."

"I know, Nick, and listen—"

Nick covered her soft little mouth with one finger. "No, Dr. Cary said you were not to talk."

"Not at all?" Bretta asked, dismay in her wide eyes.

"Well," Nick said, "you might whisper—whisper very softly in my ear, 'Nick, I love you'—you might do that."

Bretta didn't whisper it. "I love you, Nick," she said in a perfectly clear little voice. Then she hurried on. "But Nick, I do wish I had something to offer you, something you could be proud of—still, Dr. Cary said that strong, silent men—" She waited, and then straightened in his arms. "Nick, you *are* a strong silent man, aren't you?"

"Well, honey, you know I never talk much. Why do you ask?"

Bretta flushed. "Well, I shouldn't think a strong silent man would wait for a girl to ask him to kiss her!"

"I've felt as though I had a ball and chain on my ankle—your jealousy!"

Jealous

Sandy found the truth in an old adage, "More flies are caught with molasses than vinegar"

By Mary Carolyn Davies

"OH, isn't it wonderful!" glowed Sandy. "I've never been to an artists's ball before!"

"I haven't, either," confessed Joan. "I always knew it would be incredibly gorgeous, but *this!* Oh, Sandy!"

"Yes, isn't it!" glowed Sandy. "Oh, will we never get these wraps checked? What a crush! Oh, the music's beginning! Oh, oh!"

"Don't be impatient," Joan laughed. "We've a whole evening to dance in, and anything can happen in an evening."

"Yes, anything!" answered Sandy in thrilled tones, "and oh, I hope it *will!*"

"I hope it won't," laughed Joan. "Exciting things are too dangerous. I'm afraid of surprises. I like things to be safe and sure."

"Everything in my life is too safe and sure," pouted Sandy.

"Even your suitor," slyly interposed Joan. "I saw him look at you last evening when I got to town. You needn't tell me he isn't in love with you."

"Oh, Ken and I are only good friends," protested Sandy.

Oh? Oh! But—*very* good friends, aren't you?" slyly teased cousin Joan.

"Well, yes," admitted Sandy, dimpling, "*very* good friends."

"And likely to be more, some day—" hinted Joan. "Confess, Sandy, he's told you he loves you?"

"Yes—" blushed Sandy.

"And asked you to marry him?"

"Now, Joan! Well, yes, he has—"

"Oh, and I'll wager you're wearing his diamond on a ribbon around your neck this very minute."

Sandy laughed. Hemmed in as she was by the elbows of all the other pushing, crowding girls, she managed to shift her wraps to her other arm and pull out a ribbon from under her bodice. On the end of it dangled a diamond ring.

"It's a secret yet," she warned her cousin. "But, yes, I'm—crazy about him, Joan."

SANDY had been properly named Melisande, but she was called Sandy for short, partly because of her red hair and freckles. She was the outdoor sort, merry and reckless.

"He's *so* good-looking," said Joan soberly. "I wonder you're not jealous, Sandy."

"Jealous! About Kenneth!" Sandy laughed in derision. "Why, Kenneth is the one person in the world I could always trust. He has never deceived me, never told me an untruth."

"Yet," finished Joan.

"Nonsense!"

"But girls must adore him. He's that dark, wistful type."

"Yes, they do. But Ken has never taken any other girl out, or gone anywhere without me since we first began going together, six months ago."

"I wouldn't trust any man as you trust him, Sandy."

"You don't know Ken," answered Sandy.

"Do *you?*" asked Joan.

"Don't be cynical!"

"Well, I hope he's all you believe him," said Joan darkly.

"He is."

"No man is."

"Except Kenneth," flashed Sandy.

"Wait—you'll see. They can't be trusted—any of them," declared Joan.

"Kenneth is different."

"They all are—until you find them out."

"There! At last!" Sandy cried, as they received their checks. They hurried up the crowded stairway to meet Joan's fiancé.

"There you are!" cried Dick.

"Oh, Dick, how splendid of you and Joan to bring me with you!" Sandy exclaimed.

"Pity your friend Keating couldn't have come," said Dick.

"Yes," answered Sandy. "I begged him to. But he simply couldn't. He called me up and told me at the last moment. He'd have come if he could."

"Of course. Well, we'll do our best to amuse you."

"Oh, I shall love it!" cried Sandy.

And she did. For the first three dances she was in a paradise of color and laughter and enjoyment. Then, at the end of a dance, as she and Joan met, she saw Joan's smile turn to stone.

"What did you see—whom?—" she asked.

"Nothing. Don't look," Joan responded quickly.

But Sandy, stung with a presentiment of evil, swung round and followed Joan's stricken eyes. She found herself looking at a familiar figure across the room.

"Why!" her voice fell in horror. "It's Kenny!"

"IT can't be," said Joan, still hoping it was only some one who looked like him.

"Oh, it is," answered Sandy. "But how—why—I don't understand—oh, Joan!"

"Hush, Sandy, there must be a reason."

Sandy tried to laugh. "Yes. There are. Two good reasons!" she said. "Standing right beside him. And aren't they pretty! Especially the fair one." Her voice was harsh with pain.

"Sandy! Don't!"

"But Ken here—with two women! I can't understand it!" Sandy whispered.

"That's no crime," said Joan.

"But—he was to bring me! He broke that for business reasons—and now—" Sandy's eyes filled with tears.

"He hasn't seen you yet," Joan said. "Give him a chance to explain."

They watched Kenneth as he chatted with his two companions. Ken Keating was a brunette young god to all the other girls, but to Sandy he was just Kenny, part of her life, and a good deal the most exciting part just now, when she was living in the new world of romance.

She wanted to think only of him. She found herself remembering things Kenny had said and ways he had laughed—and hadn't laughed. It hurt her, when Ken was sad. Even when she was the happiest, she would recall the look of suffering in his eyes at times. He had come to mean everything to her. She had become so sure of him. And now, what could this mean? Her happy security was shaken.

"Wait," Joan was telling her. "Wait."

So Sandy waited confidently for Ken to come to her.

But just then the music started, and instead of looking for her, Ken turned with a dazzling smile to the blond girl and swept her into his arms, and out they swung together into the gay sea of dancers.

Dick came up to dance with Joan. Just before he reached them, Sandy seized Joan's arm and whispered.

"I'm going, Joan! I can't bear it! I'll get a taxi! Go on and dance. Don't worry about me!" Before Joan could answer, Sandy was gone.

While the rest danced happily on, Sandy was crying in the dark, in her little white bed, alone. All she could do was to wait till to-morrow, until she could know at last what had happened. She did not sleep at all. She heard the birds at four, and then the milkman, and then the day's steady stream of motor cars and street cars and trucks. All day long, she wondered.

WHEN Kenneth arrived in the evening he greeted her smilingly, but Sandy's eyes were full of storm. As soon as they were alone in the drawing-room, she faced him.

"Oh," she cried, in torture. "You went to a dance, a dance! You took two women! And I refused to go to the dance with Larry after I'd found you couldn't take me; I refused just so you wouldn't be hurt! And went with Joan and Dick instead. And I refused to go driving last week with Ian, on account of you, too! And now you do *this!* Oh, oh, you don't love me!" She threw herself down among the pillows and sobbed stormily.

"But, Sandy, sweetheart—" he began, but she interrupted him.

"We've only been **engaged** a

month," she sobbed, "and you've stopped loving me. You took some one else to a dance!"

She cried for a long time. Then she sat up and dried her eyes.

"Listen, Sandy—" he took her hand.

She snatched it away.

"I won't endure it!" she declared. Her eyes were angry now, no longer soft with love.

"Please, dear—" he begged.

"I want to hurt you as you've hurt me," she stated her wish.

"So that's your ambition," he said. "Well, it's the ambition of all lovers nine-tenths of the time."

"Oh, how can you joke!" she cried. She sprang to her feet. "You only laugh, whenever I'm hurt," she sobbed. "You only think it amusing! I want you to know that it's nothing to me one way or the other what you do, that I simply despise you—that you have betrayed my trust and faith in you! How could you! You! Other men, yes. But you, Ken! And telling of it so brazenly! If the dance had been a bore I'd have forgiven you, but you had a *good time!* That's what I can't forgive."

"Sandy, I couldn't help it. The boss asked me to take them. It was his daughter and a house guest of hers. I didn't mean to take them to your dance. I wanted to take them to a night club. But they insisted on the Artists' Ball. I went, trusting to luck you wouldn't see me. Dear, I knew how you'd take it. I couldn't face a scene there."

"But I cried all night—" she began.

"But—must I account to you for everything I do?" he inquired, beginning to grow angry himself.

She did not hear him. She said to him all the things she had stored up in her heart to say.

"Melisande, you're unreasonable," he protested. "You want the moon."

At this she went to pieces. She threw herself down among the cushions and sobbed.

"SANDY," said Ken, finally, in a cold voice she could not ignore.

"What is it?" she whispered. She looked up. She was afraid of what she saw in his eyes.

"I am glad this came up," he said. "I've wanted for a long time to tell you how I feel. I've felt stifled. I used to be a free agent before I knew you. I could go where I liked, and report to no one. Then—I saw you were of a jealous nature. I was careful to do nothing to inflame you. I knew that the most innocent things would hurt you. But it was galling to me, it harrowed me."

"What do you mean—" she whispered.

"I've felt all the time as if I'd a ball and chain on my ankle," he said.

"You needn't feel so any more. You're perfectly free," she said, hotly. "I'm glad you told me." With a terrible gesture of finality, she handed him her engagement ring.

"Oh, Sandy!"

"I won't be a ball and chain to you."

"Don't take it that way, honey," he begged. "Don't you see? Can't we compromise?"

But Sandy wouldn't listen. "I'll never compromise," she said.

But she did. Before he left, the engagement ring was openly on her finger and she had promised to try not to be so demanding and jealous. He, on his part, promised to be more careful of her feelings.

The next day Sandy told Joan all about it. "Yes, I found out that I am jealous, terribly so," she confessed.

"My mother was, before me, and all my sisters are, so I suppose it's in our family. At least I have it, that awful strain of black, unreasoning jealousy."

IT was that week that Kenneth learned he was being sent to a lone post in the mountains where he was to build a dam, along with a crew of his favorite buddies.

"I was tired of the office work," he explained. "I want to get out. This is what I've been waiting for. It'll be great!"

Sandy tried to share his enthusiasm. But her quick mind was already wondering what girls would be in those mountains, what dances, what diversions. On his last night in town they talked on her porch.

"Oh, Ken, let's neither of us go with other people—what do you say?—I'll keep to that if you will. I can bear being apart if I feel you're staying home thinking of me, but if I know you're playing around I get wild!" she begged.

"All right, honey," he answered.

"I can't forget that night when you took those women to the dance," she said.

"Oh, Sandy, you forgave me that!"

"Yes, but now! I'm afraid you'll do that sort of thing again!"

"But can't I be natural? Do you want me to be tied to your apron-strings?" cried Ken in desperation.

"There, you see, Ken, we simply can't agree on this thing!"

"Oh, yes, we can," he soothed her. "I'll *try* to change, Sandy. And you—please try, too, not to mind silly little things that don't matter. Won't you promise?"

"I'll try, too," promised Sandy, smiling through her tears. "Don't think I don't long to go out, too. Because I do!" she declared. "But I'm not going, although I want to—" she stopped.

"I want you to," he insisted.

But she was adamant. "I won't, because you could then, too," she said, dimpling. "I'll surely envy those girls who'll be seeing you, even, talking with you! And I'll be so lonely thinking of all that."

"Sandy, don't be foolish," he begged her. "Let's each go out a little, what do you say?"

"Doesn't our being together in the future mean enough to you for you to wait until then!" she blazed.

"Of course—" he said.

But she interrupted him. "I want to feel you're near in thought—that you're keeping away from gay places until we can go together," she declared. "Can you wait—or is it asking too much? Whatever you say—" her calm was dangerous. But she suddenly melted into lovableness. "But, oh, *do* say you'll wait!" Her lips were on his cheek.

"Sandy, Sandy," he choked.

AFTER he had gone, Melisande talked it all over with Joan.

"Now that he's going to be away," she confessed, "I'm afraid about my jealousy. I'll be tempted to yield to it often. But I won't," she decided. "Only, he's my man. I can't share him. I know I shouldn't be so savage. Jealous! Nagging! He'll begin to think I'll always be like that, that he never can have any fun. He's utterly true to me, Joan, I know that. But it's those little, gay, friendly ways with other women! They tear at my heart! And especially when I'm not there to see. I begin imagining, wondering, at night, in bed. I can't sleep for wondering."

"I know—"

"Kenny's so much more friendly by nature with just everybody than I am! He makes friends everywhere," said Sandy.

"Why can't you?" asked Joan.

"Oh, I don't seem to be like that, some way. I'm shy with people—new people that is. He isn't at all. Strangers aren't strangers with him. They're all friends! I don't mind when it's men, but when it's girls—"

"You'll have to get over that."

"Yes."

"Now," said Joan, with sinister emphasis.

"Not maybe," interrupted Sandy grimly. "Surely." Oh, she could just imagine it!

"I imagine you're right," agreed Joan.

"But I'm absolutely determined this time," vowed Sandy. "I'm going to try hard to conquer my jealous feelings."

She found herself looking at—Kenny!

"What do you mean?" asked Sandy, suspiciously.

Joan met her eyes.

"Well, now that he's going to be so far away, I mean. He'll be meeting new girls, and he'll be friendly to these people there, maybe."

And she meant it. She wrote him jolly letters. She was happy. She was sure that at last she had got over all her jealousy.

Then came Kenneth's letter after the first big neighborhood dance in his new home. He told her all about it. There

was no doubt about it. He had had a wonderfully good time!

SANDY'S first impulse was one of grief that he could have had such a splendid time without her. Then she scanned the letter more carefully, and was angrier still. Why, he hadn't once said that he missed her or wished she had been there! Had he forgotten her so soon! She became perfectly calm and cold. She went to her desk and wrote a short note as dignified as she knew how to make it. It read:

Tuesday.

DEAR KENNETH:

I just received your letter, mailed the day after the dance.

I am glad that you are having such a happy time and do not miss me any more.

This is Tuesday, the day you are going to that social you spoke of. I hope you will have a splendid time. I don't suppose you will have time to read letters now that you are so busy with more interesting friends.

Yours sincerely,

MELISANDE LANE.

She took this letter out to the corner mail box, but she couldn't quite post it. Her anger and her conscience fought a bitter battle. Then she decided not to mail the hard, cruel little note, and contritely tore it up.

Back in her room, she looked up at his photograph. The boyish eyes seemed to smile straight into hers.

She sent a happy, kind letter, and kept her hurt all to herself. She even opened the letter after she had finished it to add a bit, urging him to go to all the dances and social affairs and to make friends with the men and girls there. She meant it, and she intended to stand by it this time.

She was curious to see what his answer would be, but on the morning that she calculated it would surely be in the postman's bundle, she did not get any word from Ken at all. She could not understand it. She was a little worried.

That afternoon there was a ring at the doorbell. When she opened it, she gave a cry of surprise.

"Ken, how did you get here? I thought you weren't going to be able to leave for another month?"

"Your dear letter—that's what it was—I couldn't stay away—" said Ken, after he had kissed her.

"Oh—" said Melisande in a strange voice.

"I made them let me come!"

"I'm so glad," said Melisande, faintly.

"There isn't another girl like you in the world—" he went on, with his admiring eyes on her. "Really urging me to go to dances! But, dear, I don't believe I want to. These other girls, they're charming and all that, but somehow, when I dance with them, all they seem to be able to do is to make me lonely for you; and goodness knows I'm lonely enough for you already. There's a dance to-night, and I knew you wanted me to go, but I really felt I couldn't stick it without you, so forgive me for being a pill and shirking. What a wife you'll be, never nagging a fellow!"

"Oh, Ken, I don't deserve to be praised," she cried, her face hidden in his flannel shoulder.

"IF you knew how your letter made me love you! But of course you don't," he said, gently.

But of course she did.

"Honey, not vinegar," she mused to herself again. "Every time! It never fails."

"Dear little Sandy!" he was whis-

pering. She felt repaid for the heroic efforts she had made to suppress her jealousy.

"The art of love letters," she mused, "is knowing what to leave out. The ideal love letter is the one that's too short to have a hurt or angry word in it. Waste baskets are the places for hurt and angry words. Yes, waste baskets." She looked down at her own waste basket. "And mine," she mused with sudden prophetic insight, "is going to have a terrible lot of them. But I don't care!" she thought, "as long as I can keep Ken."

She suddenly knew that the protecting feel of his arms when he held her like this was the only thing in the world that mattered to her.

"Sandy," Ken said, very gently, "I came to ask you a question—a big one? Will you be married to me right away? And live out there with me? I suddenly knew when I got that last wonderful letter of yours, that I wanted you right away, that I couldn't wait any longer. That's why I came. Will you?"

She did not speak.

"I always thought girls were so jealous. I didn't want to clutter up my life with a wife yet, because I thought all wives were jealous and nagging. Bill and I were talking about it. He said the right girl always understood. Bill's my right-hand man there. He's been going with a girl about as long as I have with you, he was beginning to care, you know; sometimes he was sure he cared, and he wanted to snatch her and tell her so, and beg her to marry him at once, and then, at other times, he'd want to run to the ends of the earth and get away from her."

"Oh, I don't blame him—or you! But now that you're like this, Sandy! Oh, honey, say you'll marry me now!"

"Yes," she said.

HALF an hour later Ken's right-hand man appeared.

"Melisande, this is Bill," Ken introduced him.

Bill was very shy.

Melisande put out her hand in a comradely way. "Hello, Bill," she said.

At that Bill's shyness vanished. He grasped her hand with a gasp. "You're the real thing, Miss Lane."

"Melisande Keating, soon, Bill," said Ken, putting his arm possessively about Melisande's shoulders. She blushed but did not draw away.

"No!" gasped Bill again.

"Yes!" contradicted Ken triumphantly.

"Then she—" Bill broke off with a glance at Melisande.

"Oh, don't be afraid. Melisande knows all about the place, and how she'll have to rough it. She's coming anyway—and soon!"

"Girls!" breathed Bill fervently and wonderingly.

"Who can fathom them? They're a mystery," said Ken. "Men are a rough lot. They have their good points, but after all, they're a dull, selfish bunch. But, aren't girls wonderful?" breathed Kenneth reverently.

"They surely are," agreed Bill. "Keating—I'm going to wire my girl to-night—"

And Sandy added her good wishes to his message.

AFTER Ken went back, Sandy's preparations kept her busy. Their date was set. But before that, Ken wired her. He wanted her to come on for a week-end dance. She could

stay overnight with Milly, the daughter of one of his helpers, and she could bring Joan, too, if she liked.

Sandy didn't want to go. He even telephoned her long distance to coax her, but she refused. Then at the last minute she was sorry, and decided to go, after all, and surprise him.

She found the place interesting. They were building a huge dam to furnish power to a city a hundred miles away, she knew. She came to the watchman's shanty.

"He's up on the line," said the old watchman, and pointed up the hill. "Either there or he's quit work already. He may have at that, he often does, to work on his new house."

She started up the hill. It would be such fun to surprise him! He did not dream she was coming, for she had told him very firmly that she would not.

But on the way she caught sight of her own new house, the cabin he was building for her. Perhaps he was there. If not, he would surely be in a few minutes, for he always went there directly from work, he had written her.

She bent her steps toward the little cabin. It was a darling place! Her heart quickened. Dear Ken, he had built this all for her. Every thought had been for her, his love had gone into the driving of each nail, and now he was putting in the finishing touches to the house. Dear Ken! How she loved him!

She drew nearer. She was startled at the sound of a woman's voice inside the cabin. Then Ken's voice answered hers. Ken's voice!

Sandy stopped in her tracks, thunderstruck. A woman in her own new home. She heard the sound of their gay laughter. This was too much. The house to which she was to come as a bride!

Well, she wouldn't come, that was all!

She turned about and retraced her steps down the path. She would break with Ken for good. She would leave a note for him. She wanted to write it now, while she was so angry. She sat down on a log and wrote her good-by note. Then she stole back to pin it on the door. But as her hand reached up, she heard what Ken and the girl were saying.

"Don't you suppose she might be jealous," asked the girl's voice, "when she knows we girls have fixed the house up, and worked with you here, putting up these curtains and all?"

"Not my Sandy!" came Ken's reassuring, big voice. "Not Sandy! She knows too well, Milly, how much I adore her, and that she's the only girl in the world I could ever love!"

Sandy stopped, with the note in her hand.

Then on a sudden impulse, she flung the door wide open.

"SANDY!" cried Ken joyously, and sprang to take her in his arms. Then he introduced her to his helper, Milly.

"Here she is, girls, here she is!" cried Milly, and an army of girls poured in from the other rooms where they had been working to finish it all. The place was full of gay chatter. They all told Sandy how they had planned this "bee" like a house-raising of pioneer days. That was why Ken had wanted her to come. The guests had been invited before she refused.

When no one was looking, Sandy tore her farewell note into bits and threw them into the brand new waste

basket some one had thought to place near the pretty willow writing desk.

"Good luck to the bride!" called a happy voice, and girls seemed to emerge from every corner of the cabin to throw themselves upon Melisande.

They kissed her and she kissed them back.

Ken stood looking on with a proud, happy air.

There was a knock.

"Joan!" cried Sandy. "Ken, I forgot to tell you I wired Joan to come after all, and meet me here."

Joan was introduced to Milly and the other girls. The afternoon and evening were a gay success.

At the dance Joan and Sandy were able to snatch a few minutes together.

"Girls aren't all each other's enemies after all; Joan, you were wrong," Sandy whispered.

"Yes! I was!" Joan whispered back, and, after a moment she added, "and I'm glad I was wrong."

"And Ken! Isn't he a dear?" said Sandy.

"Yes. He's so proud of you. How shamelessly he's been showing you off to those girls!" answered Joan. "And I know he praises you to them by the hour."

"And they're so sweet and generous that they don't mind. Oh, Joan, my jealousy's gone for good. I'm never going to be distrustful of other girls again!" Sandy exclaimed. "And as for Ken—oh, Joan, isn't he good to me!"

"Sandy," Joan said soberly, "I'm going to marry Dick, after all. Today decided me. I think men *are* sort of wonderful, even—"

"Oh, Joan, they're just miracles, that's all!" breathed Sandy. Then the music claimed them all again, and the girls were forced apart.

Ken found a moment in which to take Sandy out from the crowd, to stroll under the pines between dances.

She told him how much she liked the place and the people, especially the girls.

"You've made my friends already for me, Ken," she said. "I shan't have that to do. You made the girls like me before they ever saw me." Then she told him everything; about the note, and her change of heart. "At last I've learned my lesson, Ken," she said, happily. "You needn't worry about me any more."

For answer he kissed her, very gently and tenderly. Sandy clung to him.

"I love you," he said.

"I don't deserve it," said Sandy, softly, "but, oh, keep on doing it!"

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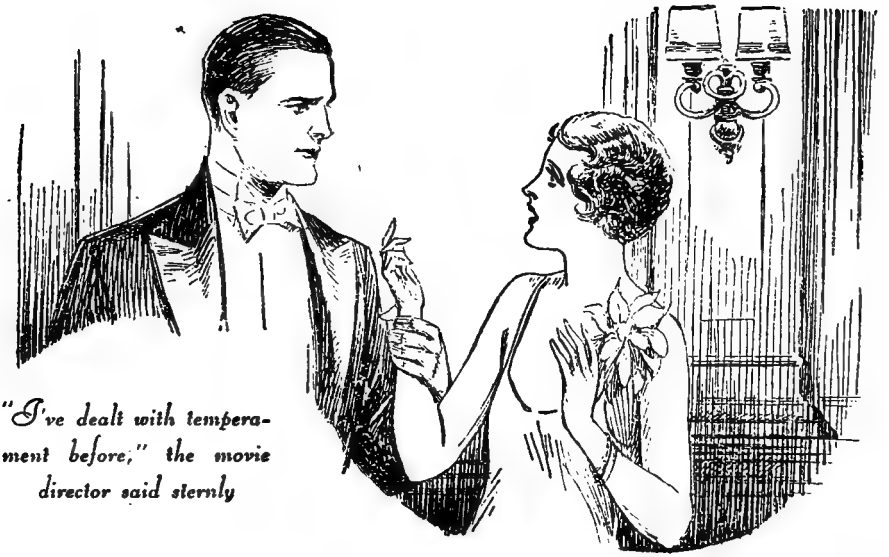


"I've dealt with temperament before," the movie director said sternly

New Year and New Love

The tale of an "extra" girl in Hollywood who carried her masquerade "a little too far"

By Jane Littell

THE Lotus Club of Hollywood is a home for motion picture girls, run like a club and sponsored by some of the most prominent women of the film world. To be able to give the Lotus Club as her address marks a girl as a "regular," one who is taking her career seriously.

It is a manless Eden, sometimes facetiously called a "prep school for the old maids' home."

The whole first floor is devoted to lounges, drawing-rooms, libraries, and dining room—plenty of space for girls to entertain their beaux—but, as a rule, men fight shy of entering that place.

Living at the Lotus Club has its ad-

vantages, though. Here girls get better than average accommodations for less than average prices, because the club is not run for profit.

Here they obtain the best possible telephone service — important, since casting is almost always done by telephone, and any call may mean a job for some one who needs it badly. Because calls are so important, the girl at the switchboard makes every effort to locate the girl wanted.

On the 23d of December the studios were almost closed for the holidays, and any calls that came in were for retakes. A feminine voice asked over the phone if a Miss Smith lived there, and the operator inquired:

"Do you mean June Smythe?"

"What does she look like?" came from the other end of the wire.

"She's about twenty. Red hair that photographs black. Blue eyes. Lovely white skin. None of the freckles you expect a redhead to own. She plays aristocratic atmosphere—"

"That's the girl," the voice interrupted. "May I speak with her?"

JUNE SMYTHE was sitting listlessly before her dressing table, drumming with bored fingers on its plate-glass top.

She was tired of reading, tired of living at the club with only girls for companions, tired of submerging every desire for amusement to the demands of the wardrobe that kept her working fairly steadily as "aristocratic atmosphere."

She got more work than the other extra girls because she always had just the right clothes. And she was paid fifteen dollars a day because she spent almost everything she earned to keep her precious wardrobe in condition to earn that fifteen.

If she hadn't supplied her own clothes she would have received only half that—and she would have worked much less often.

But was it worth it?

If she hadn't bought that spangly evening dress for the picture she was scheduled to work in after New Year's, she could have gone away for a few days' vacation. And she surely did need a change!

What she needed most of all was a little masculine society. Probably it was because she hadn't any men friends that Malcolm Brewster seemed so awfully important to her.

It couldn't be that she was in love with Malcolm. He had never spoken a personal word to her, nor she to him. She had worked in several of his pictures, and he had never noticed her, beyond telling her what to do on the set. But just being on the same set with him was enough to send her home with eyes full of dreams.

Decidedly, what she needed was masculine society. But how was she going to get it? What a kick she would get out of riding down Hollywood Boulevard in an open car, headed for the beach—beside a handsome man!

Malcolm Brewster, for instance. Not that there was the slightest chance of it. Directors had too many stars purring around to notice extra girls.

That's the way it is in Hollywood. Nobody pays any attention to you until you get some place in pictures — and you can't get any place in picture work until some one notices you and pushes you along!

THAT was June's mood when the telephone rang. She sprang to answer it. Even a studio call for a batch of retakes would be welcome. Anything to help kill time for

the next ten days—until Malcolm Brewster started his next picture. The picture for which she had bought the spangly gown.

"Hello?" said June intently.

"June! June Smythe?" asked the velvety voice at the other end. A voice June did not recognize. A voice that she felt sure didn't belong in any casting office.

"Yes," said June.

"Caroline Van Ness speaking. I have just had a letter from your mother, telling me you were in Hollywood. And I'm wondering if you'll come out and spend the holidays with us. I'm going to scold you for not coming straight to us when you arrived, too!"

"Caroline Van Ness?" repeated June in a puzzled voice.

The lovely voice laughed.

"Aunt Caroline, if that will make you remember—although I'd rather be called Caroline than aunt, since I'm not really your aunt. I haven't seen your mother for years, my dear, although we have always corresponded, and I haven't seen you since you were a tot. Which makes me all the more anxious to see June Smythe's daughter again."

"But—"

June wanted to say that her mother's name hadn't been June; that she had been motherless for years; that Caroline Van Ness was talking to a strange June Smythe; but the voice went on.

"Brent — my son — has brought a crowd of young men home with him for the holidays. I've invited in some of the local people, but I'm short a girl. And when your mother's letter arrived, telling me you were out here —my dear, you simply must come! There will be a number of picture people, so you won't feel strange. Malcolm Brewster, for one, and—"

BUT June didn't hear any more of it. By some fortunate mistake—by some lucky break — she was being asked to a house party where Malcolm Brewster would be!

Malcolm Brewster, who was enthroned in her heart—the stubborn heart which refused to give up his image, no matter how useless it had seemed to cherish it.

"—really want you, my dear," Caroline Van Ness was saying, when June's attention got back to her. "Bring several evening outfits, and just sport things for daytime. There'll be a party every night, and that means rather lazy days. I'll pick you up at the club late this afternoon."

Only stupefied silence answered her. Time stopped for June. For a measureless interval she hung suspended over a pit of temptation. Here was such a chance as she had never even dreamed of! A chance to meet the one man in the world on social grounds. A chance to make him notice her as a person—not just as a rack for the clothes he needed to ornament his pictures.

Oh, could she bear to let it pass her by? What did it matter that Caroline Van Ness was mistaking her for some other June Smythe? June Smythe was being invited to fill a certain social niche—and this one was sure she could fill that niche as well as any other June Smythe. Dared she—

"Are you there?" asked Caroline Van Ness anxiously.

"Yes," said June. "But I was—thinking—"

"Oh, please don't make excuses!" begged Caroline Van Ness swiftly. "What would your mother think of me

if I permitted you to spend a lonely Christmas at that club when I'm giving a house party? Besides that, I want you for your very own self, my dear."

"Sure?" asked June with a suppressed giggle.

"Absolutely sure!"

"Then I'll be ready—" June said.

Why not? In a party as big as this one, the hostess was mostly concerned with providing an equal number of girls and men. So long as a girl was well dressed and knew the social routine, it probably didn't matter to her very much if she did get the wrong June Smythe.

Caroline Van Ness would probably ask her a lot of questions. What would that person do if she found that June was an impostor, accepting hospitality under false pretenses? A little panicky shiver ran over the girl.

But then, it had been ten years or more since Caroline Van Ness had seen the June Smythe she thought she was inviting. And surely Mrs. Van Ness would know that June was working in pictures—she couldn't live at the Lotus Club if she weren't.

WHEN June walked into the club library to meet Mrs. Van Ness, she was starry-eyed with excitement. She looked as though she were going to keep a rendezvous with love.

She had on her dull blue and nutria ensemble—slim, straight dress of blue duvetyn, with a coat of the same material, almost entirely skirted with soft nutria fur. Pulled down over her auburn curls was a little blue felt, making her eyes as blue as her costume.

It was one of her best picture ensembles, one she never wore except for pictures. If anything happened to that outfit, it would be just too bad!

"My dear!" cried Caroline Van Ness, kissing her delightedly. "How lovely you are! I'm so glad I've found you again!"

"Nice to be found," said June, smiling mischievously. "Doubly nice at Christmas time. This promised to be a very dull holiday season—"

"It will be anything but dull, I assure you," laughed Mrs. Van Ness.

And when they were in the car, she went on:

"Now tell me all about yourself, my dear. How long have you been here, and what have you been doing? And how did you ever persuade your parents to let you come out here alone? And pictures! Do tell me what you've done?"

A little wave of fright swept over the girl. This was going to be difficult! It would be just too awful if she queered herself with Caroline Van Ness before she ever got to the party!

She just *couldn't* lose her chance with Malcolm! She couldn't! Not after having the opportunity to be with him almost within her grasp.

"Oh, I've been here quite a while," the girl managed to say airily. "I'm working atmosphere—clothes stuff, you know—"

"That ought to be easy for you, my dear, if you brought your own wardrobe with you," said Mrs. Van Ness conversationally.

What did that mean? The girl waited. Apparently the June Smythe she was impersonating was rich.

"Why—I've been in several of Mr. Brewster's pictures," June went on in response to another question.

"So you know him, then! That's nice. He's a rather difficult person—a little older than Brent's crowd, you know. I'll pair you off with him at dinner," said Mrs. Van Ness with sat-

isfaction. "Won't he be surprised when I tell him that J. Walter Smythe's daughter has been working as an extra in his pictures?"

She chuckled appreciatively.

THE girl almost gasped in her amazement. J. Walter Smythe's daughter! So that was who Mrs. Van Ness thought she was!

Why, J. Walter Smythe was one of the steel barons—a national figure, with more money than he and his wife and daughter could ever manage to spend, no matter how carelessly they threw money around.

And they did throw it around carelessly. The newspapers were always telling of their elaborate parties, their yachts, their airplanes. She surely had something to live up to, if she were to masquerade as J. Walter Smythe's daughter!

Thank goodness, she could dress the part! Her picture costumes were a little elaborate for private social gatherings—but then, wouldn't J. Walter Smythe's daughter be likely to dress elaborately?

"Do you have to tell him that?" she heard herself asking in a dismayed little voice.

"That you are J. Walter Smythe's daughter?" asked Mrs. Van Ness, in amused tones. "Well—rather! My guest of honor must take her proper place. It will put several supercilious feminine noses out of joint. Anyway, why shouldn't you be yourself?"

June managed to smile—but she wondered. She didn't want to meet Malcolm Brewster under false pretenses. She wanted him to like her for herself—she wanted him to know her as a hard-working little picture girl.

Then, too, if he thought she was J. Walter Smythe's daughter, it wouldn't do her career any good. He would think she was just amusing herself in pictures; that she wouldn't stick to her job; that she couldn't be depended upon in emergencies.

No, she had everything to lose and nothing to gain by posing as a millionaire's daughter amusing herself by making a temporary place for herself in the film world. She couldn't endanger her career that way, not even to intrigue the attention of the one man in the world.

"I'd a lot rather be introduced just as plain June Smythe," she said urgently. "I don't mention J. Walter when I'm working. Why should I be handicapped when I'm playing?"

CAROLINE VAN NESS shrugged. "As you like, my dear," she agreed. "I understand how you must enjoy getting out from under the shadow of your father's vast—influence—"

"Standing on my own two feet is thrilling," said June, marveling at the way words could be made to mean two different things. "Please—please let me go on doing it!"

"As you like, my dear."

But June knew, the instant she came into the great living room with its chattering groups of people, that Caroline Van Ness had not kept her word. Or rather, she had told these people in advance that June Smythe was the daughter of J. Walter Smythe.

There was too much interest, too much curiosity, too much silky deference in the greetings she received. J. Walter Smythe's daughter was a social lion, taking precedence over the picture people—even the directors and the stars—as by divine right.

What a tricky situation to be in! Suppose some of these people knew

the real Smythe girl! What would they do if they found June was an impostor? She hadn't intended to get into anything as serious as this.

And what would happen at the studios when the word got around that little June Smythe—well-dressed extra girl—was really a millionaire's daughter incognito?

Would all her carefully cultivated standing with casting directors go for nothing? They liked to give work to girls who needed it.

June was frightened. Was she to pay for this chance to be with Malcolm with her career? But wasn't it worth it?

Wasn't a chance to make Malcolm Brewster love her worth anything—everything else in the world? Of course!

THE other girls at the house party doubled up, shared rooms. But J. Walter Smythe's daughter rated a suite of her own. And such a lovely suite! A sitting room, a bedroom, and a bath of her own.

It was a good thing, too, for the garments June Smythe wore in private didn't match the quality of those she wore in public.

J. Walter Smythe's daughter would have night things and negligees of elaborate daintiness, while June's were the simplest and most inexpensive. All her money went into costumes for the camera.

But when she came down to dinner in the spangly green gown she had bought for Malcolm Brewster's next picture, she looked the part of J. Walter Smythe's daughter. Lovely, fragile, expensive. If anything should happen to that gown—

Malcolm was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs. Waiting with an amused smile, a little air of deference that she had never seen him wear before—not even for the biggest picture star!

A little thrill of disappointment ran over the girl. Even he was not proof against the glamour of wealth and prestige. Or was he? In his eyes was amusement—

"So you've been successfully tricking us all, eh?" were his first words. "Well, if you really were taking pictures seriously, my dear, you could go a long way. You must be intelligent, or you wouldn't have got away with your masquerade for so long. And intelligence, added to what I've seen you do before the camera, is the material of which stars are made."

"Please!" she begged swiftly, worriedly. "You are making a mistake. I'm not masquerading. I'm June Smythe, extra girl—"

His eyes laughed at her.

"Going to stick to your story, are you? You should have warned Caroline—"

"I did!" she said quickly—and then realized what he was taking her words to mean. They sounded like an admission that she was J. Walter Smythe's daughter. "I mean—"

"You mean you went on posing as an extra as long as you got a kick out of that, and now you want to go back to your rightful status. Or are you trying to skim the cream off both situations?" he asked.

"I MEAN, I'll be on the set the day after New Year's, ready to work in your new picture," she told him desperately. "Mrs. Van Ness promised me that she wouldn't—"

"Caroline would promise anything to get her own way," smiled Malcolm.

"And as long as she keeps the letter of her agreement, her conscience seems to be clear. The spirit of it is something that doesn't concern her."

"What?" asked the worried girl.

"Oh, she told us all who you are—and then asked us to go on pretending you were just a little extra girl," said Malcolm.

"But that's just what I am," she insisted, tears misting the blue eyes that implored him.

"Of course. The best dressed extra in Hollywood, taking work away from girls who need it. Didn't that ever occur to you in your wild search for thrills?"

Speechless, the blue eyes stared up into the brown ones above her. What was she to do? He would never believe her now, if she told him she wasn't J. Walter Smythe's daughter. The word would go around—as such news always does get around in Hollywood—and she wouldn't get any more work. There would be other directors who would feel that she was taking bread out of the mouths of girls who needed it more than she did.

But they didn't! She had to work! Oh, how could she prove to them that she had to work?

And how could Malcolm be so cruel? He was the kindest director in Hollywood. Was it just that he resented being tricked? But she hadn't tricked him!

What a bewildering situation? She had taken a chance on this posing as another June Smythe just to be near Malcolm Brewster—and he despised her for being the person she was pretending to be!

"I suppose Caroline didn't tell you why she was so anxious to get you here, either," said Malcolm, gazing down into the pleading blue eyes.

"Why—she—" stammered the girl. "You tell me!" she begged.

"EVERY one else is laughing about it," he said. "And I owe her something for robbing me of my best dressed extra girl—"

"Oh, please!" she begged.

"—so I'll tell you. Callie—her daughter—is all steamed up over a pretty picture boy. Val Valient. And he's anything but Valient. Val sees a good meal ticket in Callie, and her mother knows it. And Callie swears she'll marry Val. Caroline—smart gal that she is — figured that Val would transfer his attentions to you instantly, the Smythe millions being what they are. And Callie would be cured of her infatuation by watching her erstwhile sweetie make a play for a richer girl. See?"

June stared back at him for a moment. A long moment. And then the humor of the situation struck her. She burst into silvery laughter. She laughed and laughed and laughed—until finally her laughter grew a bit hysterical.

It was too funny! Too complicated! And presently she didn't know whether she was laughing or crying.

Tears streamed down her cheeks—but peal after peal of laughter continued to ring through the room. Malcolm stared at her thoughtfully.

"Do you think you could repeat that before the camera?" he asked. "I know what it is — hysterics. But it looks like gorgeous grief. You're the only girl I ever saw who could cry—beautifully—"

And that only made it worse. June covered her face with her hands and tried to stop. And then she was sobbing—sobbing wildly.

"Here!" snapped Malcolm, who

had dealt with hysterics before. "Stop it!"

Forcibly he took her two hands from her face, whipped out a silk handkerchief, and mopped at the tears. And when she didn't stop, he slapped her. Deliberately. Sharply. Across the cheek. That did the trick.

"How dare you!" she cried.

"I've dealt with temperament before," the movie director said sternly. "Now go and wash your face and put some fresh powder on. I'm to take you in to dinner, and I don't want my dinner partner sobbing into her soup."

"She won't!" promised June defiantly, glad of a chance to fly to her room and bring order—some kind of order—out of the chaos of her thoughts.

THAT slap. What did she care about that? Malcolm meant it in kindness. She had seen him slap an hysterical star—

But he must care a little, to bother whether she had hysterics or not. That was the thought that comforted her. Oh, if he came to love her, what would she care about a career? Being Mrs. Malcolm Brewster was all the career she would ever want.

But how could she make him care for her as a person? Any attention she got at this party was accepted under false pretenses.

How awful it would be to have Malcolm come to the point of a proposal—thinking she was J. Walter Smythe's daughter, when she hadn't any way of proving to him that she wasn't?

Suppose she told him the whole story—told him that she had been so desperately lonely and bored, so obsessed by a love for him that she was willing to take any chance to be with him. Wouldn't he believe her?

But wouldn't he think she was throwing herself at his head? There were girls who would go to any lengths to get the attention of a director. There was the girl who threw herself under the wheels of a director's automobile and was nearly killed.

No, she couldn't do that. She couldn't do anything. She was trapped. She had deliberately, and with her eyes open, walked into the situation, and now she must play the game. Thank goodness, she had all the threads of it in her own hands.

All she could do was to stick to her story that she wasn't J. Walter Smythe's daughter. And then it occurred to her that she hadn't said right out that she wasn't. Every time she had tried to say it, her words had looked like an admission that she was.

Well, she would say it, the very next time she got a chance. The only trouble was, she didn't get a chance!

When she went downstairs again, they were waiting for her to go in to dinner. Her outburst had been seen and commented upon.

Caroline had warned them all not to upset her again. If she wanted to go on posing as plain June Smyth, let her. Give the girl her fun. They all knew who she was.

AND so, with Malcolm on one side of her, Val Valient on the other, and Brent Van Ness across the table—all vying for her attention—the dinner was served and eaten. Somehow, in the excitement of her rôle, she found a keen enjoyment.

There was frank envy in the eyes of the girls, sharp acid on the edge of their words, and admiration, deference and flattery from the men. June would have been superhuman not to have enjoyed it.

Dinner over, more local people drifted in to dance. Naturally June Smythe, and her successful hiding of her identity in pictures, was the chief subject of conversation. It was uncomfortable, this being the center of all eyes, but June was having such a gorgeous time that she managed not to feel too guilty about it.

"You are carrying your passion for masquerade a little too far"

Brent, Val and Malcolm almost fought with each other for her dances. Brent finally stepped aside, as a good host should, and left the field to his rivals. And June soon settled the question of whom she preferred to dance with.

"Do you think I ought to pay for my entertainment," she whispered to Malcolm, "by being nice to Mr. Valient?"

"Why should you?" asked Malcolm. "You didn't agree to do it when you came. Why let Caroline use you that way?"

"I'd lots rather dance with you," she murmured.

"I'm honored," he said, and June thought there was sarcasm in his tone.

"No, it is I who am honored," June protested. "It isn't every extra girl who can dance with her favorite director."

"It isn't every director who finds his favorite clothes horse is a princess in disguise," Malcolm countered.

"SO that's all I am, is it? A clothes horse! And I do so want to be an actress," she mourned.

"Well, haven't you proved to your own satisfaction that you are?" he asked.

"No," she said. "But I could if I had the chance. Won't you please believe that I'm not J. Walter Smythe's daughter? That I'm—"

"My dear girl!" he protested. "Do give me credit for a little sense. You couldn't crash this party if you weren't. Caroline Van Ness doesn't ask little extra girls to her house parties. Now let's drop the subject and enjoy ourselves. It isn't every evening that a hard working director can enjoy the society of a 'dollar princess' in disguise—even if it isn't such an effectual disguise."

They danced on silently.

"Well, will you go on sort of protecting me from Val Valient?" she asked. "You're a big director, and he's only a featured player. He wouldn't dare be very rude to you—"

And she was sorry as soon as she had said it. She didn't want him being nice to her because she—who he thought was J. Walter Smythe's daughter—had asked him to. She wanted him to be nice to her because he liked her. She wanted a chance to fan that liking into love.

"Is there a man alive who wouldn't want to protect you?" he asked softly, and June was so delighted at his words, so happy, that she almost lost step. "It would be very easy to be swept off my feet—to pour into your pink little ears just the sort of words that Val is planning to pour into them. Oh, why couldn't you have been little June Smythe, extra girl?"

WHY wouldn't he believe that she was? She turned starry blue eyes up to him. She had to hear what he would say next. She had to make him say the words that she wanted to hear.

"I tell you—" she began.

"Haven't you any conscience?" he asked, the tenderness gone from his voice. "Don't all those lies mean a thing to you? What sort of a girl are you? An adventuress! Nothing less! Leaving a luxurious home to hunt for thrills. How you managed to get your parents to agree to it—to cover up your absence with newspaper mention of you—is more than I can understand. That picture of you in last Sunday's rotogravure—"

"What picture?" she asked.

"With a big fish you caught in Florida. The picture was mostly fish—not very distinct of your face. Money can buy anything, can't it?" he asked.

"Would it buy you?"

"No, it wouldn't," he said shortly. "You've got me down for the count, my dear—but I'll take the count."

On they danced. Wordless now. June was a battleground of conflicting emotions.

Oh, she must prolong the situation! She must make him care for her as a person. She must go on playing the game. She wouldn't try to tell them that she wasn't the girl they thought.

And when it was over— Well, she would meet Malcolm on the set the day after New Year's. Or would she? Maybe he wouldn't let her work in his pictures any more!

"My dance," said a voice sharply, and Val snatched her out of Malcolm's arms.

Malcolm let her go. She had been dancing with him continuously for almost an hour.

June watched while he cut in on Callie and danced away with her. She saw him no more that night, nor the next day. But she hardly had time to miss him. Val Valient was constantly by her side and she was hard put to

answer his questions without giving herself away.

DINNER was late on Christmas Eve, because they were to make a night of it, finishing up the gayety with a strange note. The whole party was to go in cars to the sunrise Christmas service at the Hollywood Bowl.

By dint of being rather insistent, she managed to ride beside Malcolm in his car. And so one of her dreams came true. She was riding down Hollywood Boulevard in an open car beside a handsome man—and that man was Malcolm Brewster.

The big, glowing, electrically-lighted cross that could be seen for miles in those minutes just before dawn was awe-inspiring. The solemnity of the service made all worldly troubles seem petty. All that trickery, all those pretenses, all her lies, became suddenly unbearable.

As they walked up the hillside to the car, June felt she must make a clean breast of it all. She must stand before this man that she loved true and honest. Suddenly words were tumbling over themselves in their eagerness to get themselves said.

"It was to be with you, Malcolm," she said humbly. "I—you see—I've loved you for a long time. But you never noticed me—"

"Darling girl!" he said softly, as they strolled along, quite alone in the midst of thousands of people. "Of course I noticed you! But a director is in a delicate position. If he pays special attention to an extra girl, there is talk. And I couldn't have talk about you, precious. I was waiting. You were bound to have your chance—and I didn't want to be the one to give it to you. Love is blind, they say—but I was afraid maybe love saw something that others didn't see—"

"Did you really—love me—all the time?" she cried happily.

"We want to be absolutely honest, don't we, lovely? I didn't love you—until I met you last night—"

"Oh!" she wailed, disappointed.

"—but I liked you and admired you," he finished. "How could I know that I loved you when I hadn't ever spoken to you off the set?"

"But I knew I loved you!" she protested.

"DARLING," he said softly, "I know now! I knew last night. I knew instantly I met you with the studio barrier down. Isn't that enough?"

"Yes," she said softly. "Oh, do we have to go right back to the house? Can't we drive a little while—just you and I?"

What is sleep to two who have just discovered paradise? They drove down to the sea. They watched the morning turn from gray to purple and then scarlet. They watched the light turn to gold, and the sea from dull green to blue. And they planned for the future.

To-morrow—the day after Christmas—they would go down town and file notice of their intention to be married. California law requires this notice to be filed at least three days in advance of the marriage ceremony.

Then they could celebrate on New Year's Eve by being married. The honeymoon would have to wait, for Malcolm's picture was scheduled and actors were standing by—as June was standing by—for their January 2nd call.

June would go on working in it. She wanted to. She didn't want to be separated from her beloved for the

long hours that the studio swallowed him up.

"Oh, I'm *so* happy!" sighed June, in her lover's arms. "I didn't know I could be so happy!"

"Beloved!" murmured Malcolm, his lips hovering just above hers.

With a little laugh that was choky with happiness, she pulled his head down just the fraction of an inch, so that his lips met hers.

"I've loved you so long!" she whispered.

Finally they turned back. Reluctantly. A full day had been planned—breakfast at two o'clock, since nobody had gone to bed before seven. And the lovers not at all. And after breakfast, the Christmas tree.

"Heavens!" gasped June. "I didn't even bring my hostess a gift!"

AT the first lull in the activities, June and Malcolm would take Caroline aside and tell her that June Smythe wasn't J. Walter Smythe's daughter. They would ask their hostess to forgive the deception and put themselves in her hands.

They were late getting back, and they found the breakfast party in full swing. The guests were as excited over the Christmas tree as a houseful of children. And presently they were all gathered in the big living room, and Caroline was distributing gifts. Ridiculous fun-making toys and expensive, delightful gifts.

And then, as the guests opened their gifts and examined the cards attached, they came over to June, one by one, to thank her enthusiastically. Every member of that house party received an expensive, delightful gift—*from June Smythe!*

Malcolm, standing beside her, opened his package and found a matching cigarette case and pocket lighter of gold and cloisonné. He held it under June's bewildered eyes. Wordlessly he showed her the card attached.

> To my favorite director—with every wish for a Happy Christmas and the most successful of New Years.
>
> JUNE.

"I thought you didn't bring any gifts!" he accused her.

And then another voice interrupted: "Oh, thank you so much, June! My watch is lovely! How did you know I loved baby blue enamel?" It was Callie Van Ness.

"Thanks, June! You're very thoughtful—"

Malcolm was regarding her with narrowed eyes. Cruel eyes. Loathing eyes.

"So this morning—just one last lie to cap your whole tissue of lies, eh? *My* June couldn't have bought all this expensive truck!"

"I didn't buy it!" the girl protested. "I never saw any of it before! Mrs. Van Ness—"

"Oh, bother Caroline!" said Malcolm angrily. "What were you trying to do? Get me married to you before I found out that you really were J. Walter's daughter? I wouldn't marry you, June Smythe—not if you signed away all rights to your inheritance. I've seen too many men marry rich girls—and then deteriorate into lap dogs. This is the end!"

He marched away, June after him.

"MALCOLM, darling!" she begged. "Ask Mrs. Van Ness right now! She knows! All those Christmas gifts prove she knows! She's playing a game—and you know what that game is. You told me! Oh, please, Malcolm!"

The intensity in her voice must have touched him, for he stopped, turned, and came back. Then he marched up to Caroline Van Ness.

"Caroline," he said in a voice that carried through the room. "June is trying to make me believe that she isn't J. Walter Smythe's daughter. She thinks—she claims you know she isn't. She says she never saw any of these Christmas gifts before—"

"How absurd!" cried Caroline. "What sort of a game is this, June?"

"It isn't a game!" cried June desperately. "I had Malcolm all convinced that I'm what I am—a hard working extra girl. And not J. Walter Smythe's daughter at all! He asked me to marry him! And now—he turned me down. All those expensive things—he thinks I really bought them! Why, I couldn't have! Oh, please, please! Don't wreck my whole life! Tell him that I'm—just me!"

"June," said Caroline Van Ness severely. "I think you are carrying your passion for masquerade a little too far. Of course you're J. Walter Smythe's daughter! Why else would I have invited you here?"

June gasped—and gasped again. Then she turned and fled to the suite that was set aside for J. Walter Smythe's daughter. She flung herself down on the taffeta covered bed and gave herself up to tears.

What a mess! What an awful price to pay for a few hours with the man she loved! He never would believe her now!

She lay there a long time, thinking. The tears dried on her cheeks.

THEN the door opened and Caroline Van Ness walked in. Wordlessly they stared, each measuring the other.

"Why did you buy all those gifts and pretend I did?" June asked.

"Wouldn't any hostess do that, under the circumstances?"

"What circumstances?"

"Why," Caroline's eyes dropped before the girl's direct gaze as she said it, "I snatched you up and didn't give you a chance to do any shopping of your own. Naturally, J. Walter Smythe's daughter—"

"But I'm not J. Walter Smythe's daughter—*and you know it!*" said June accusingly.

"Yes, I know it," said Caroline Van Ness. "But I won't admit it—unless you bargain with me."

"What do you mean?" asked June breathlessly.

"If you'll show up Val Valient—let him propose to you, let him make himself conspicuous—I'll tell Malcolm the truth. But I won't tell him until Callie is safe from that snake Valient."

"I won't do it!" said June fiercely. "You're taking advantage of me! You're—"

"You didn't take advantage of me when you pretended to be some one you are not, did you?" said Caroline Van Ness with a sneering smile. "You didn't accept my hospitality under false pretenses?"

Neither of them noticed that the door into the hall was opening slowly.

"I—I thought—you just wanted another girl for your party—that it didn't matter much who the girl was, so long as she knew how to act. I—thought—"

"YOU thought you'd get a grand holiday at my expense," Caroline accused her. "Well, it's all right with me—but you've got to pay for it. If you won't do what I want, I'll wire the J. Walter Smythes that

there is a girl in Hollywood posing as their daughter. There ought to be some legal penalty attached to that—"

"But I never said I was J. Walter Smythe's daughter!" protested June. "*You* said I was! I was fool enough not to deny it. But I've been telling every one ever since I got here—you included—that I'm *not!* You're the one who'll get into trouble with the law—"

"She's right, Caroline," said a voice from the doorway. Malcolm Brewster's voice!

June hopped up, flew to him and found herself clutched tight in his arms! What a blessed haven of refuge! Nothing could happen to her now. Malcolm would protect her.

"Eavesdropper!" said Caroline scornfully.

"What I like most about you, Caroline," said Malcolm with a rueful little smile, "even when I know I shouldn't like you at all, is that you always have a snappy comeback. But this time you're caught. You go downstairs and clear this girl's name of possible difficulties—"

"Oh, very well," said Caroline resignedly.

"We'll join you shortly," Malcolm added.

And when they were alone in that lovely little sitting room, Malcolm dropped into a chair, never for an instant letting the girl he adored out of his arms.

"You poor baby!" he crooned. "Will you ever forgive me?"

"Forgive you!" she cried. "Why, I *love* you, Malcolm! And when you love some one, they just can't do anything that requires forgiveness. Don't you know that?"

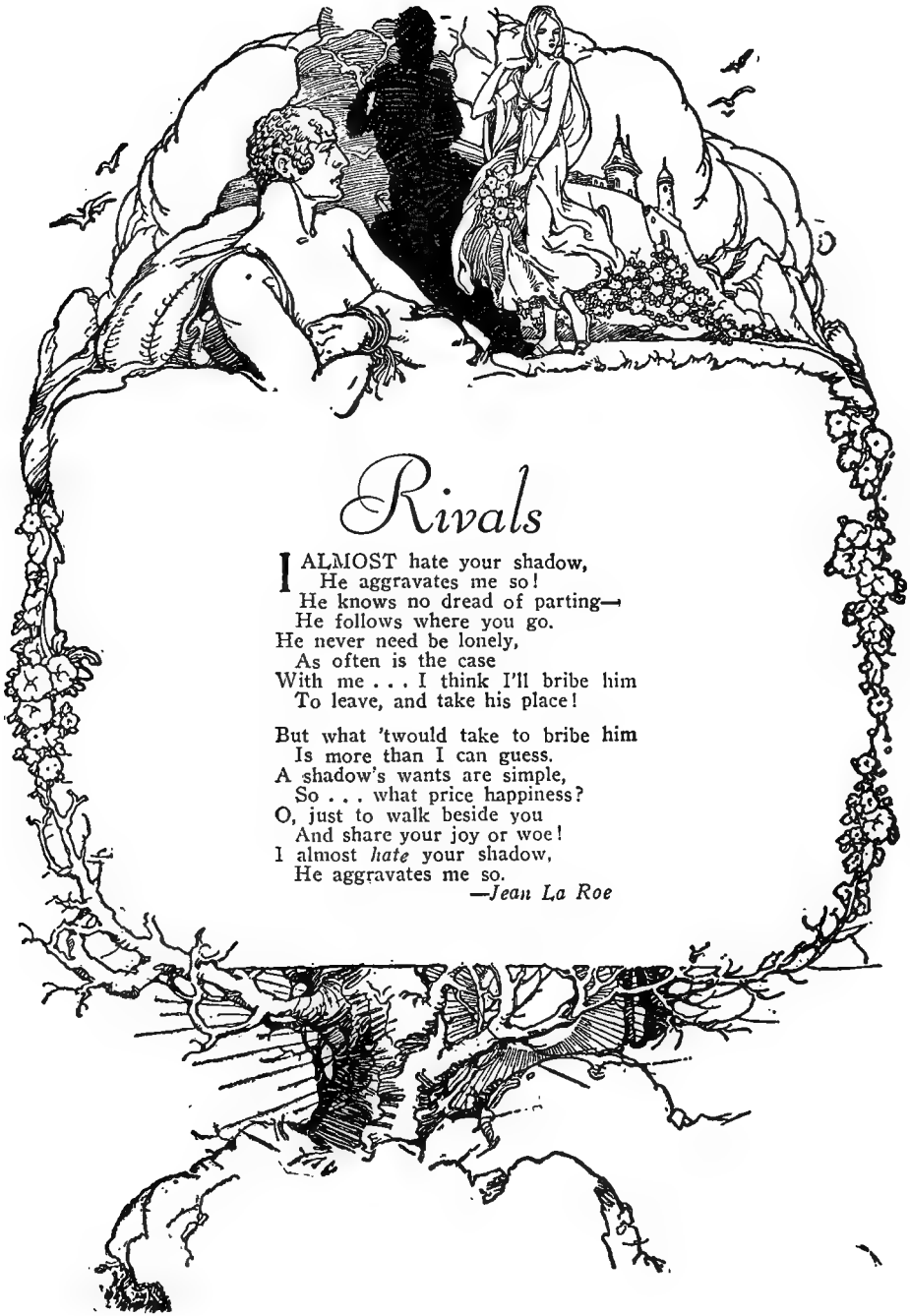
"Now I do," came his kiss-muffled words. Who wants to talk anyway, with the most wonderful girl in the world in his arms?

And Caroline had plenty of time to explain her scheme for saving her daughter from a fortune hunter, for time means little to lovers in a paradise of their own.

Wishes

I DO not wish a lilac spray
When spring comes back
Some April day—
I long for a lilac tree,
A grove of lilacs, possibly.

Nor do I wish a love frayed out—
(From careless use,
Beyond a doubt!)
I long for a love born new,
Young, ardent love—a gift from you!

—*Edith Tatum*

Rivals

I ALMOST hate your shadow,
He aggravates me so!
He knows no dread of parting—
He follows where you go.
He never need be lonely,
As often is the case
With me . . . I think I'll bribe him
To leave, and take his place!

But what 'twould take to bribe him
Is more than I can guess.
A shadow's wants are simple,
So . . . what price happiness?
O, just to walk beside you
And share your joy or woe!
I almost *hate* your shadow,
He aggravates me so.

—*Jean La Roe*

"Come here, you!" he called

Palace of Love

"Love," Gifford told her, "is the most wonderful thing in the world." And then he broke her heart. So Myra condemned all men

By Doris Knight Jessee

MYRA LOWE counted her money. "Five dollars — and then I starve!" she said aloud. It sounded worse that way. She wanted it to sound worse. Because she had a queer faculty of never being able to realize things until they were right upon her. Then it was often too late!

For instance, if she could have got it through her head that she wouldn't get a job in New York, she wouldn't have come. Or perhaps she would, just the same.

Myra put her fingers into her ears while the Elevated roared by, shaking her little room. Then she went over and looked into the uncertain mirror in the stained and scarred golden oak bureau. She stared at her reflection as if she had never seen it before. Big, gray eyes, almost black in her excitement; nice complexion; dark hair, sleek and shining; a heart-shaped face. Nothing the matter with her looks—or her clothes, either, for that matter. No one would dream that she was a pauper. No one would guess that she had just five dollars left in the world.

She seized the newspaper and bent again over the advertisements. There were the same old things—canvassing jobs, typing and stenography, bundle-wrappers, mothers' helpers. She had tried them all. She wasn't wanted, because she wasn't trained. She had no experience in anything.

Except falling in love. Her lips twisted in a wry smile as she thought of marching up to that snippy woman at the employment bureau and saying:

"I made a mistake, Miss Dean, I have had experience, after all. I'm qualified to tell all about love—because I've had lots of experience in getting my heart broken. I've been in love twice. Really in love. Both times the man I loved turned out—no good."

The newspaper blurred before her eyes as she thought about it. She could see Gifford Brent's smiling eyes. He had the darkest, most expressive eyes in all the world. Sometimes they had smiled into Myra's; sometimes they had looked sad. But it was when they began to look *love* at her, that Myra forgot that she was a man-hater, and began to wonder if, after all, all men *were* alike.

She had been engaged to Joe Warren a year before that—and he had married some one else. It was then that she had decided that all men were impossible.

Until Gifford Brent came to town. After a while she began to wonder what under heaven she could have seen in Joe Warren! It was a miracle that he had married that fat Allen girl who had so much money. Because that left Myra free to love Gifford Brent.

Gifford came to fill all her waking thoughts, and often she dreamed about him at night. He took her out often to movies and the theater. But it was the evening that they went to the dance at the country club, that she had first known he cared for her.

MYRA looked out of the window. It wasn't a very clean window, but she could see only too clearly. There was a brick wall right opposite. That was all. Sometimes, in the afternoon, a little sunlight came uncertainly down the deep cavity between the two buildings. But it never got as far down as Myra's tiny room.

Now, as she stared at that dingy brick wall, it seemed to disappear. In its place was a garden, the air heavy with the sweet scent of flowers. A moonlit garden with winding paths leading down to the river. She could see herself strolling down one of those paths with Gifford. She had on a dress that was seemingly made of moonbeams—a silver frock fashioned of dainty silk net. About her shoulders floated a gossamer scarf.

Gifford looked at her as though she were a lovely princess stepped out of a romantic tale of knights and ladies of old. "Why, I love you, Myra!" he had said. "I love you!" The miracle of his voice. It had sent a queer thrilled feeling clear to Myra's little silver slippers.

She had looked up at him. A shaft of moonlight wrapped them about like a magical cloak of dreams. "Love?" she had repeated uncertainly. She hadn't thought there was any such thing as love: not after Joe Warren and his heiress. "Love?" Her hands were trembling.

He caught them tight in his.

"Of course. Don't you know what love is, little Silver Princess?" Swiftly he drew her to him. His lips found hers. When he released her she was breathless, shaken. "That's — love," he had said, and his voice was a trifle unsteady. "It's the most wonderful thing in the world. Why, without love, life wouldn't be worth living!" He had kissed her again, and Myra had returned his caress.

She had found out that what he had said was true. Life wasn't worth the living without love. But Gifford had

gone away from the little up-State village the next day after that garden party. He had sent her a short note, saying he was leaving for New York —and that was all.

Months dragged by, leaden, uninteresting. Myra could not forget Gifford's kisses; she kept on remembering the pressure of his arm across her shoulders. She thought of the way his eyes had glowed, and the sweet expression of his mouth. His chin was so firm, too. He was a man among men. Tall, athletic. Everything a girl dreamed about, was Gifford Brent. No wonder he was so hard to forget. Other men tried. Myra always had plenty of masculine attention.

Then Myra's uncle had died suddenly, and when the will was read she found that there wasn't any money. Everything was spent. There was nothing left.

AT first Myra hadn't comprehended. All other worries were swallowed up in the vast wave of grief which engulfed her. Myra's uncle had been both father and mother to her. He was her only relative, and he had been loving and understanding. Now that he was gone, she was indeed alone.

Later she began to realize. She would have to go to work. Bitterly she wished that she had had some training which would be of aid to her now. But she hadn't. Life had been a matter of keeping house for Uncle Ned and going to parties and having a good time. Abruptly everything was changed. Her friends advised her to go to business school, but she was too impatient.

"I'll get a job," she said. "You'll see!"

Perhaps she could have got a job—back in her home town. But a new and breath-taking idea had occurred to her. She would go to New York! Rumors concerning Gifford had drifted back. He was doing some advertising work. Some one said he was press agent for a cabaret. Why not get a job in New York, then perhaps some day she might see him! The thought thrilled.

With five hundred dollars in her purse, Myra had arrived at Grand Central Station. Exactly three months later she was sitting in her miserable little room, staring at a lone five-dollar bill.

The five dollars hadn't come from the five hundred, either. It was the price of the silver frock. She had sold the dress that was all she had left of that magical night when love had been a thing of moonlight and beauty. Five dollars—and romance was dead!

Myra shook her head angrily. Tears hurt when they come straight from your heart. She wiped her eyes and went on reading the advertisements. There was only one that might possibly do.

"Wanted—girls to dance at the Palace of Love. Coney Island."

Well, anything was worth trying. She must go on existing. Even if love wasn't real and romance had died, there was the business of eating and sleeping and struggling to find a measure of content.

She took out the hat she had bought when she first came to New York. It was a pretty hat—a felt that was silky and had good lines. She had paid twenty dollars for it. The thought made her shudder now. But she had always been used to paying a lot for her clothes. How was she to know that five hundred would only go such a very little way? A gray hat, a gray dress, a dark gray coat with luxurious

fur at the neck and cuffs. She surveyed her reflection in the mirror. No one would ever guess that this outfit was all she had left in the world! Everything else had gone to the man around the corner. It was Myra's first experience in a pawnshop, and she sensed that the things should have brought more money, but she did not know how to bargain.

She powdered her nose and put a little color on her pale cheeks. As she did so she glared at the silver compact. It was a pretty trifle, and she had once been very fond of it—but now she would have liked to smash it. And all because her initials were engraved on the cover. That kept her from selling it.

With a sigh she went out and shut the door behind her. It was good to be free from the tyranny of that horrible little room! She slowly descended the three flights of stairs and emerged onto the street. Unconsciously she stood straighter, her lips set in a firmer line. She wasn't going to give up and go back to her home town, where everybody would say: "I told you so!"

Suddenly she laughed aloud, to the great bewilderment of those passing by.

She was laughing because she had suddenly realized that she couldn't go back, even if she wanted to. The fare was six dollars!

Four dollars and ninety-five cents! All the weary way out to Coney Island on the subway, that sum made a little song in her thoughts. It was funny to think that starvation was just around the corner!

To take her mind from her troubles, she began reading the advertisements which lined the car. The picture of the man in the Nifty Togs ad reminded her of Gifford. Wasn't she ever going to forget him? Was the memory of his love-making going to stay with her always? Couldn't she ever be free from the tyranny of loving some one who hadn't proved worthy?

Sobs choked her throat.

When she came out of the depths of the subway she gasped in horror. It was raining! Not hard, it was true, but the occasional spatters would ruin a light gray hat. She lingered under the shelter of the entrance. What was the use of trying to go on any longer? Everything was wrong. The cards were stacked against her from the first. She might as well—

QUICKLY she gave herself a mental shake. Before she had time to consider further, she took one last look at the news sheet and went out into the rain. Luckily it wasn't far. She didn't have any trouble finding the place.

Viewed in the morning light, through a misty rain, the Palace of Love Dance Hall wasn't an overly cheerful spot. The paint was peeling off the front of the building, and the sidewalk was cluttered with old newspapers and the wrappings from candy and ice cream pies.

Myra went in hastily, before her courage had time to evaporate. A forlorn handful of girls were huddled in front of a swarthy individual. He was saying sarcastically as she entered: "A nice lot of dancers you turn out to be! All you do is step on my feet. Instead of being light as thistledown, you're all like a ton of brick!"

Myra wished she were outside in the rain. If he talked to her like that she would—

"Come here, you!" Myra looked behind her, but as there didn't seem to

be any one following, she judged he meant her. "Give us a tune, Barney!" The limp-looking man who sat at the piano began thumping the keys with his long, slender fingers. It was an old melody he banged out rhythmically. "My sweetie's gone away and she didn't say why." Mentally Myra fitted the words to the half-remembered melody. How prophetic! She smiled at the swarthy man. He glowered at her.

Grasping her about the waist with a grip like that of a wrestler, he danced with her down the long vista of deserted, shining floor. When they came back to the place where the rest were, Myra was tired, but still determinedly keeping step.

"That 'll do, Barney!"

The song stopped in the middle.

"You're not so good, but you'll do."

"You're not so good yourself!" said Myra calmly.

The others gasped, but the man grinned. "Sure. I know that. But you'll have to dance with fellows that are a lot worse than I am, so—"

"Dance with—" began Myra. "Why, I thought we were to—to put on a revue or—or something."

"Been reading too much, maybe!" suggested the man. "Why, girly, I wouldn't take any of this gang for a dance revue! Not on your life. Girls like that need training." There was that hateful word again! "But I need some girls to dance with my customers. You'll do. I'll take you." He walked along and selected several others. The rest he dismissed.

"My name's Jones," he announced. "Now, young ladies, I pay you two dollars a night—and you get a percentage on your tickets. See? If you get a lot of tickets, you can make as high as five dollars in one evening. You can start to-night. Oh, yes, you have to wear evening dress."

MYRA went blindly out. She didn't even notice that it had stopped raining. The rest of the girls went off, chattering. She knew that she got on the subway again. She was conscious that the train jerked and stopped eternally. A dance hall girl! A girl who had a badge pinned to her frock to show she was a professional dancer. A girl who had a percentage on the string of tickets men bought for the privilege of dancing with her. Yet underneath all her rebellion against the job, was the knowledge that she would accept the opportunity to make money. She *must* take this job. At least it was honest.

Another thought came. Evening dress, he had said!

She pawned her purse and her gray dress to get back her moonbeam gown. Now she was indeed destitute. Under the smart gray coat, she had only a gingham dress to wear. The only reason she hadn't sold that was because they wouldn't give her anything for it.

But even so, she tramped about all day in the gingham sedately covered by the pretty coat, in the hope that she could find another job. There wasn't anything. Why, she couldn't even get a job wrapping things in a bargain basement! They gave her a try at that and she failed to make a neat parcel of a flour sifter and a small hoe, which some one had requested wrapped together.

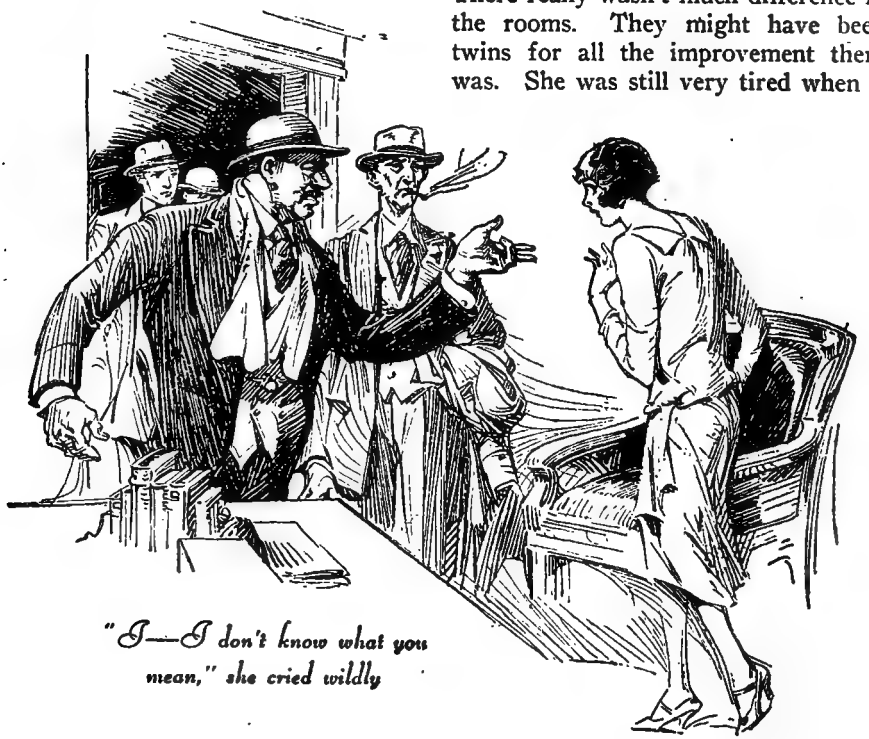
When evening came, she put on the moonbeam dress and went back to Coney. She was tired from the excitement of the day and all the walking she had done. Before the night was half done, she wished she had rested every second.

Fat men stepped on her feet. Thin men stumbled every time they tried to reverse. She wondered where all these hideous dancers came from. Probably no girl who wasn't paid for the job would dance with them. She knew she wouldn't. Her legs grew weary, her feet hurt, her back ached; yet she danced on, doggedly. Some fulsome compliments were whispered in her ears. One man tried to invite her to a midnight supper—but, taken as a whole, the night didn't prove as terrible as she had fancied it would be.

Luckily the Palace of Love closed at one. At exactly five minutes past one, Myra was on her way home—alone. In her pocket was her wage. She had earned four dollars. Never had she felt so rich.

"I—won't—starve," she murmured sleepily, just before she tumbled into bed.

But when the next evening came, she wasn't so sure. She gave up her room and took one nearer Coney. There really wasn't much difference in the rooms. They might have been twins for all the improvement there was. She was still very tired when it was time to dress and go to the dance hall.



"I—I don't know what you mean," she cried wildly

"YOU look kind of ratty," observed one of the other girls candidly as she surveyed Myra's pale face in the mirror. "Tired?"

Myra nodded.

"You new at this game?"

"Yes."

"Well, put a lot of rouge on, or you won't get so many dances. Men don't like girls without pep."

Myra thanked her and obeyed. But she didn't tell her new-found friend that the reason she felt so suddenly desolate was because she had glimpsed a man who reminded her of Gifford Brent. She had seen him just as she entered the Palace.

The place was ablaze with lights. Under cover of evening the lack of paint didn't show, and when a great many people were going along, the newspapers on the sidewalk weren't visible. Coney was pretty—at night. It reminded Myra a little of the way the lights were strung along the river out by the country club at home. Only there were a myriad more lights here, of course.

Just as she had paused a second to admire the lights, a man had come quite close. There was something about the set of his proud head and the way he carried his shoulders that made Myra's heart race faster. He had gone by her and entered the Palace before she got a chance to glimpse his face. When she came in, he was nowhere to be seen.

Gifford Brent had spoiled everything for her, she mused. Everywhere she went, everything she did, had the echo of a memory. She had known him only a month, but he had changed the world for her. Then he had gone away. Gone, after telling her he loved her. Of course, it hadn't been real. He didn't actually care or he couldn't have left her without a word of comfort during these weary months.

The opening chords of the orchestra warned her that she must hurry. With a last fluff of her hair, she went to stand along with the rest of the girls. Her cheeks burned with mortification as men looked appraisingly at her. It was degradation for the moonbeam dress, too. But somehow she was glad she had it back. Anything was better than thinking that some one else was wearing that frock.

She stood up very straight and smiled stiffly.

A short, fat chap came over to her with a lot of tickets in his hand. It was just at that moment that she saw —Gifford Brent!

She hadn't been mistaken. It was actually he!

Her pulses pounded wildly. If he would only notice her! Then she remembered that she was nothing but a paid entertainer—a dance hall girl. Misery flooded over her like a physical ache. She wanted to run, yet she could not leave. It was as though her legs had suddenly ceased to take orders from her brain. The fat chap changed his mind and danced with another girl. She was alone.

Gifford turned. He looked directly at her. Their glances locked. Myra was conscious that she kept the stiff smile on her lips, like something she could not get rid of, but she never felt more desolate in all her days.

For Gifford did not speak.

Some one came and danced with her. Then some one else. Myra followed the crashing, noisy jazz of the orchestra. She felt as though she had died. It was only the empty shell of a body which kept on dancing to this bedlam of sound. Her soul had gone somewhere else.

Just when she knew she couldn't endure the torture of being in the same room with Gifford Brent and having him ignore her for one more instant, he stood before her.

"MYRA!" he said. Just that. They began to dance. Only now, everything was different. The dance hall was a place of

light and gayety and lilting melody. Every one was happy. She felt happiness pressing in closely about her. Her heart thudded wildly. On every hand she heard laughter that was really gay, and merry conversation. She saw that the Palace of Love was a wonderful place of enchantment. All because she was dancing with Gifford Brent.

He danced divinely. Myra forgot that she was weary. She forgot everything save the joy of being once more in his arms. The months she had not heard from him were as if they had never been.

They didn't talk until the second dance, then Gifford said: "I couldn't believe that you were real — when I looked at you a moment ago. You see, I've dreamed of seeing you—in that dress, so many times—" His voice trailed away.

Myra's eyes were star-like in her happiness. He hadn't forgotten, then. Whatever had happened, he hadn't forgotten! She could hardly control the trembling of her hands.

"But whatever are you doing here?"

She told him. For a moment she thought he was going to tell her something in return, but evidently he thought better of it. "I'm sorry," he said slowly. "I hate to see you—having to work. Like this." He hesitated. "Do you suppose you could come outside a while? I—I can't talk in here."

She nodded. It didn't matter to her whether or not she lost her job. Anything, just so Gifford kept on looking at her in that adoring way, with his eyes bright with love. Exactly as she had remembered. They went out the back door and sat on a bench. The spot wasn't romantic. All the backs of the amusement buildings came into a sort of square. The bright lights were in the front. Sordid ugliness at the rear. But Myra wasn't conscious of that, for she was in Gifford's arms. Again his lips were pressed tightly against hers. She knew the wonder of being beloved.

"Myra," he whispered, "I had to run away, that other time, because I was engaged to another girl." She stiffened and drew back a trifle from his embrace.

"What?" she said faintly.

"Please try to understand, dear. I didn't really love her, but we had drifted into an engagement. I thought she cared, and that I would be acting the part of a cad if I let my love for you cause me to forget her. But I soon found that she didn't actually love me at all. She gave me back my ring. She's married to some one else."

Myra looked up: "Then why didn't you let me know? If chance hadn't brought us together again—"

"I didn't have a job. I was broke." He spread his hands in a gesture of hopelessness. "It's only lately that I've got on the track of a business venture that actually looks good. And in the meantime—" Again he seemed on the verge of confiding in her, but once more caution overrode.

A man came out of the gloom and stood before them. "Sorry, Gif," he said. "But that job we was talkin' about— You know. Well, it's up to us to get busy—right now."

Gifford got to his feet.

"I'm sorry," he said to Myra. "I have to go. What is your address?" She told him. "I'll try to see you tomorrow. Good-by—*dear!*"

ALL the rest of the evening the memory of that little word of love lingered in her ears. She didn't see Gifford again, but she thought constantly about him. What

had he been going to tell her? What was the business venture about which he was so secretive? Who was the man who had come to summon him?

There wasn't so much of a crowd at the Palace of Love as there had been the night before. After twelve, Myra didn't have so many dances. She was glad. It was good to dream about Gifford and his love. He had kept on caring. She hugged that thought tightly to her breast. He had loved her—really. It hadn't been just pretense.

At a quarter of one she sought her dressing room. The rest of the girls were still standing about in the hope that they might get one more dance.

As she went into the big room where they kept all their wraps, a man's figure dodged out. It was quite dark in the hall. Myra stifled a scream. In the second that the dressing room door had been opened, she had seen that he was the same man who had known Gifford so well. What could he have been doing in the cloak room?

When she went in the lights were on. Instantly she saw that things looked disarranged. Fear clutched her. She ran to her coat and felt in the pocket. Her money was gone—all she had in the world!

As she leaned against the wall, quite faint, the other girls trooped in. "Look quick in your purses!" she said. "Some one's taken my money!" There was instant bedlam. Every one who had left money or a purse in the room had been robbed. Most of the girls had kept their money in their stockings or about their persons.

They comforted Myra as best they could, and left her to go wearily toward her miserable room. She had earned only an extra dollar during the evening. Three dollars—and she owed the landlady that much.

In the sanctuary of the desolate room she let herself think. She recalled Gifford's reticence concerning his job. She thought how friendly that common-looking man had been with him. She wondered what Gifford was doing? What was this mysterious job that he refused to mention? Fear came like a hideous specter.

What if Gifford and this common man were in partnership—thieves! She put that thought from her mind, but it kept recurring. All night long she turned and tossed in miserable indecision. Gifford couldn't be anything but fine—still— Things looked so strange.

In the morning something happened to reduce her to the lowest ebb. Mr. Jones, of the Palace of Love, called quite early. With him was the limp chap called Barney who played the piano. When she came down and faced Mr. Jones, wonderingly, in the dingy little parlor, it was this Barney who spoke first.

"The girls all say that you were in the dressing room when they came in and found a lot of their stuff gone. What about it, sister? Better come clean!"

MYRA gasped. The full enormity of what he was hinting did not come to her until a few moments later, but even at first she was astounded. "Why, I—I don't know what you mean," she said, stuttering. She was conscious that she was the very picture of guilt.

"Did you take their stuff and pretend like you'd been robbed, too, to sort of cover up your tracks?" Mr. Jones shot that sentence at her.

She wetted lips that were suddenly dry. "I told you all about it," she cried. "Everything just as it happened. I saw a man run out of the

girls' dressing room just before I went in."

"Ever seen him before?"

For only a second Myra hesitated. She shook her head. "No," she said.

"Well, that story's pretty thin. Guess you'd better come down to headquarters with us."

"Oh, no, no!" Myra was at her wit's end. Was this some terrible nightmare?

"I tell you I was robbed, too!" She was beginning to see everything through a haze of tears.

"Ye—es?" Mr. Jones got up. "Come on, sister!"

"Just a moment!"

Myra looked up, startled. Gifford was standing in the doorway. Behind him was the queer man who had dodged out of the dressing room.

She caught her breath. What did this mean?

Mr. Jones was looking past Gifford and the other man, straight into the stern glance of a policeman.

"Too bad, Jones," Gifford said briskly. "Your little game has lasted for quite a while, but the authorities have been trying to catch you for some time." Myra blinked. "You were pretty clever, but you weren't clever enough to realize that it looked funny after a while when only your dance halls got burglarized, time after time. When you began picking on your own entertainers—that was about as low as any crook could get!" He turned to the officer. "Take Jones and Barney along," he commanded. "Here's the warrant for their arrest."

Jones glared at Gifford. "I might have known that there was something fishy about you when I hired you as a publicity man!" he snarled.

"On the contrary, that's my business. But this gentleman"—he nodded toward the man Myra had seen coming out of the dressing room—"is a detective. He put me on to you, and we worked together. I had more chance to have access to your papers and so on."

Jones made a lunge toward Gifford, but the policeman intervened. "Come on, you!" he commanded, and took Jones and Barney away.

The detective turned to Gifford. "I'd like to give you a job with my firm for this," he said.

Gifford shook his head. "I've landed that theater publicity job I've been after so long," he said, "but I enjoyed trying my hand at catching crooks."

The two shook hands, and the detective wandered to the door.

"She's a peach!" he said apropos of nothing at all, before he gave a final grin and left them alone.

Myra looked at Gifford. "I—I was afraid you were the robber," she confessed.

He caught her close. "I am," he said. "I'm going to steal *you*—right now! We're going to City Hall for a license this very minute. I'm not going to chance losing you again."

"But I can't get married in a gingham dress!" objected Myra.

"You look beautiful in anything, my dearest," said Gifford. "Besides, now that I've got a good job, I'll buy you all the lovely frocks you want! That is—*almost* all you want!" he amended, giving her the fifteenth kiss.

"I love to keep house," said Myra happily. "And I don't want to go to a dance—ever again. Not as long as I live!"

But they did—lots of times!

Love's Dictionary

A VACANT room is one where you are not;
a wasted day
Is one that has not let me hear you speak.
Eternity is living when you've had to
go away,
If only for a seventh of a week.

A mask is something I must wear that people
may not guess
How much I care. Celestial is the blue
Of eyes I like to see myself within, and
high success
To know that what I do is pleasing you.

An altar is the place I keep my love for you,
and where
My heart's a candle burning all the while;
Deep sorrow is to fancy that I've hurt you
unaware,
And happiness is just to see you smile.

—*Jean La Roe*

Love from the Clouds

By Emily Somerville Witt

"What, Margaret, flirting again?"

Twice he denied her love, yet Margaret risked death for the sake of her chosen lover

MARGARET LANGSTON looked down over the side of her plane. Fifteen hundred feet below, a city nestled in the green of surrounding hills.

For four years—ever since she was sixteen—the very name of this place had held the power to set her blood pounding in a way that was half joy, half pain. Because *he* lived there.

It was the thought of again visiting this Southern city that had induced Margaret to accept an aëronautical company's assignment to fly from coast to coast, and from Canada to Mexico "to expose the sporting young people of the land," as the head of the company had expressed it, "to the aviation germ."

"Sooner or later people of every age and class will be flying," the executive had said. "We want to hurry it up a bit. When they see girls like you piloting a plane from city to city, the whole nation will become air-minded."

Thus had been born the idea of the consolidated Aviation Country Club, whose members could breakfast in the clubhouse on Long Island and dine in

a clubhouse of a city a thousand miles away. It had been a wonderful idea and the last six months had proven it to be a successful one.

But Margaret smiled to herself as she remembered how shocked and aghast her family had been when she first broached the subject of this tour. Her mother had offered her a trip abroad, a pearl necklace—anything.

Only her father had understood. It was he who had bought her a new plane after she had learned to fly, in the days when her heart was broken as a result of her visit to that Southern city.

THERE they were now—Margaret and Lieutenant Godwin, her expert mechanic—in their big cabin monoplane, circling lower and lower toward the landing field.

In answer to a telegram Margaret had sent, her former schoolmate, Grace Alston, was probably waiting for her, with maybe—but, no, she mustn't even think of that.

Her hand was not quite steady on the throttle as she cut off the gas and began to glide to the earth. A moment of hovering, settling, and she had landed.

She wiggled out of her leather flying coat as she stepped to the ground. The next minute Grace's arms were around her.

Margaret shut her eyes. She was afraid to look for—surely, that tall figure beside Grace must be—

No, Grace was introducing him as Bob, a stranger, and the others gathered around were the usual group of spectators.

"To think of having a guest arrive right out of the clouds, Peggy, you old dear! I've been so excited ever since I got your wire I haven't been able to sleep a wink. Bob insisted on coming. I'd like to show you off at the club to-night, so hurry up with your trunk, suitcase, knapsack or whatever you travel with by the air route, and let's be going."

Grace's friends! But hadn't *he* wanted to come?

With an effort Margaret choked down her feeling of disappointment, and soon she was tucked in the shiny blue roadster between Bob and Grace, going fifty miles an hour toward—what?

All through their arrival at the beautiful, white-columned old house, the greeting of Grace's soft-voiced mother, the being shown to her room, these words were hammering through her brain: "Where is he? Where is he? Why don't they tell me where he is?"

Alone at last in the big bedroom upstairs, she went over to the photograph on the wall. A tender smile curved her lips as she looked at the half smiling, boyish face gazing back at her.

His shirt was soft and opened at the throat. The hair was pushed back from the broad forehead in soft waves. The eyes were quizzical, but courageous, as if this boy of twenty-one were ready to meet whatever might offer.

But it was at the sensitive lips that she gazed the longest. The mouth of one who could laugh and love, and yet be hurt, horribly hurt.

A shiver went up her back.

MARGARET remembered the first time she had seen the picture. Her chum had pulled it out of a trunk at school four years ago.

"My brother, Jack," Grace had announced to the crowd of girls hovering around. At that moment something had happened to the heart of sixteen-year-old Margaret Langston.

It had hurt her when the girls had begged, bargained to rent the picture for a week—ten days. Surely Grace wouldn't do such a thing! But she had. Perhaps it was because she was flattered over Bess Aldridge's admiration because she was older, a senior, that she let her have it first. All that year Grace reaped a steady income while Margaret suffered each time the picture changed hands.

At last the picture was all hers for a whole week! Without telling any one, Margaret had had a miniature copied from it.

And now, in Grace's bedroom, she pulled out the locket that hung inside of her dress and opened it. There it was, the painted likeness of the picture! The eyes were brown, as was the hair. By listening she had learned that—the color of his eyes and hair.

How willing Grace had been to talk about Jack—the things he did when he was a little boy, the books he liked to read, the things he said. She even read bits of his letters aloud.

Yes, long before she could meet him, Margaret had known and loved Jack Alston.

Then that wonderful week he had spent with Grace at school, when Margaret was eighteen! It had been heaven to sit beside him at the theater, to feel the roughness of his sleeve against her bare arm, to hear his voice.

He and Grace had planned a house party to which Margaret had promised to come in the summer vacation. After he had gone, there was the joy of his letters—all her own.

At the house party, here in this mansion, Margaret had lived in a heavenly daze, while others moved as dim phantoms. Only Jack and herself seemed alive.

They had danced together, swum together, spent long hours talking—talking about his work, what he hoped to do, his love of flying, the plane he was going to buy. Surely, he had adored her then!

MARGARET drew in her breath. Nothing hurt her like the fear that perhaps he had never loved her, that she had been just like other girls to him.

No, there had been love in the pressure of his hand the night they had raced back from the swimming pool in the moonlight.

And the evening his lips had touched her hair when they danced and she had looked up into his eyes—he must have loved her then!

She remembered also the night at the fish pond when he had bent over her—she had known he was going to kiss her—and she longed for it. Then suddenly Bess Aldridge had appeared in the path and laughingly cried, "What, Margaret, flirting again?"

From that moment things had begun to go wrong. Bess was so beautiful, but without a conscience; she would stop at nothing to make another girl appear in the wrong.

Margaret had been too proud to hit back, could only look on in fascinated horror as Bess wove a spell around a bewildered Jack.

Then that night! That awful night!

Margaret's cheeks burned even now at the remembrance of her humiliation. Jack and Bess had been in the garden and restlessly Margaret had started up the steps to her room when they met her in the hall.

There had been a look of excited triumph on Bess's face that should have warned Margaret. But her eyes had met Jack's and she wondered why they had such a hurt, pleading look, as if

he was begging her to forgive him for something.

"Peggy," cried Bess, putting her arms around Margaret's shoulders. "I have such wonderful news, and you are to be the first to be told—for you and Jack are such good friends. *We're going to be married!*"

"You and Jack married!"

A ghastly sickness seized Margaret by the throat. She put out her hand to grasp something, but met only blackness.

The next thing she knew she found herself lying on the floor with all the house party guests gathered around and curiously watching her.

Grace was bathing her forehead with cold water and casting angry glances at Bess, who, in a high, excited voice was explaining, "Just as I said 'married,' she keeled over. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

THE horror and humiliation of that night! Grace had tried to save her, had got her upstairs away from curious eyes, had planned the telegram that was to call her home next morning before the others were up.

Then, as she kissed her good-by at the station in the cold gray of early morning, she had whispered:

"I'm so, so sorry, Peggy. Nothing will convince me that he doesn't love you more than anything in the world. It's Bess. She has tricked him into it some way. You know how at school she got everything she wanted, even the invitation to come here. It will all turn out right in the end. He will never marry her. She wouldn't make him happy."

But Margaret had shaken her head and pulled away. You can't admit, even to your best friend, that you have given away your heart without it being asked for or wanted.

A year later Grace had written her a sketchy note of the automobile accident in which Jack had been hurt and Bess killed.

Margaret had gone on flying. Perhaps because she knew that Jack, too, loved to feel the control stick in his hand, the rush of wind on his face. She felt closer to him in the air.

She had expected word from him, or additional information from Grace. But there had been nothing. When she could bear the waiting no longer, there had been this chance to come, and she had seized it.

THERE was a knock on the door and Grace entered. She curled up on the day bed and patted the pillows by her side.

"Slip on something comfortable, Peggy, and sit beside me. There are lots of things I want to explain before you see the family at dinner." Then, as Margaret seated herself: "It's about Jack. We are brokenhearted over him."

"But, Grace, what?—"

"It's so dreadful, Peggy. I hate Bess Aldridge. It was all her fault."

"But, Grace, she's dead."

"Peggy, listen to me. Jack never loved Bess. I know it as well as I know my name. He never loved any girl but you. I didn't blame you for leaving that time. But how I wished you had stayed! Bess could get anything by hook or crook. She lied to Jack about you. I have never seen any one as unhappy as he was after you were gone. I found some scraps of letters he had written to you. I thought he had torn them up himself. I believe now that Bess found them and destroyed them. For weeks he must

have wondered why you didn't write. She was determined to marry him."

"Hush, Grace, we mustn't talk so. She's dead."

"Yes, she's dead," said Grace, leaning forward, her eyes full of tears, "but she has Jack under her spell more than if she were alive this minute."

Margaret gasped in horror. "Grace, what do you mean?"

"I mean if she had lived, Jack would finally have seen through her. He would never have married her. But dead, she is holding him fast. She is ruining him."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"As I told you, Jack was driving the car the night of the accident. Things hadn't been going right with them. I think they must have been quarreling. He didn't see the curve and they plunged twenty feet. His back was hurt, but he managed to pull Bess out. She was still living then, and he held her until help came to them."

Margaret shut her eyes in pain.

"She was cruel," Grace went on. "She told him he had killed her, that he had never loved her. After the others had come, she kept repeating that when he was walking around alive he must never forget that she was lying in her grave because he hadn't seen the curve. Then she died. The doctors explained to Jack again and again that Bess was so badly hurt she didn't know what she was saying. But it has done no good. He's wild. And, Margaret, he is *paralyzed!*"

"Oh, Grace, not that!"

"It's his spine. But we have had specialists from everywhere and they all say the same thing: he could move if he would only make the effort. For over six months he has lain there—all because of Bess. We love him so it is killing us to see him like this. You must help us."

"You know I will."

AFTER dinner, Margaret whispered to Grace, "May I go to him now?"

"Yes, he is waiting. He is in the garden room."

In her white dancing frock, Margaret sped through the garden, past the seat where she had sat so often, past the fish pond.

There was honeysuckle growing on the lattice by the door leading from the garden. Margaret drank deep of its fragrance as she caught her breath before entering the shaded room where Jack lay.

She wondered if he could hear the beat of her heart as she stood by the entrance. He held out his hand to her. How white and thin he was!

"I was wondering if I had imagined Grace saying you were here," he said, in his same dear voice as his fingers closed over hers. His eyes had the pleading look of a little boy.

Margaret forced herself to smile. Gently she drew away her hand so he would not know that it was trembling.

Yesterday she would have thought it impossible to love any one more than she loved the strong, fine Jack she remembered. But now a deep tenderness so flooded her for this new Jack, it was all she could do not to put her arms around him, draw him close and comfort him.

What did it matter about herself, her pride? But she must be calm, matter-of-fact.

"Jack, I am going to confess I was disappointed not to see you standing at the flying field, looking up to welcome me out of the clouds. You see, I didn't know about this," she touched the bed.

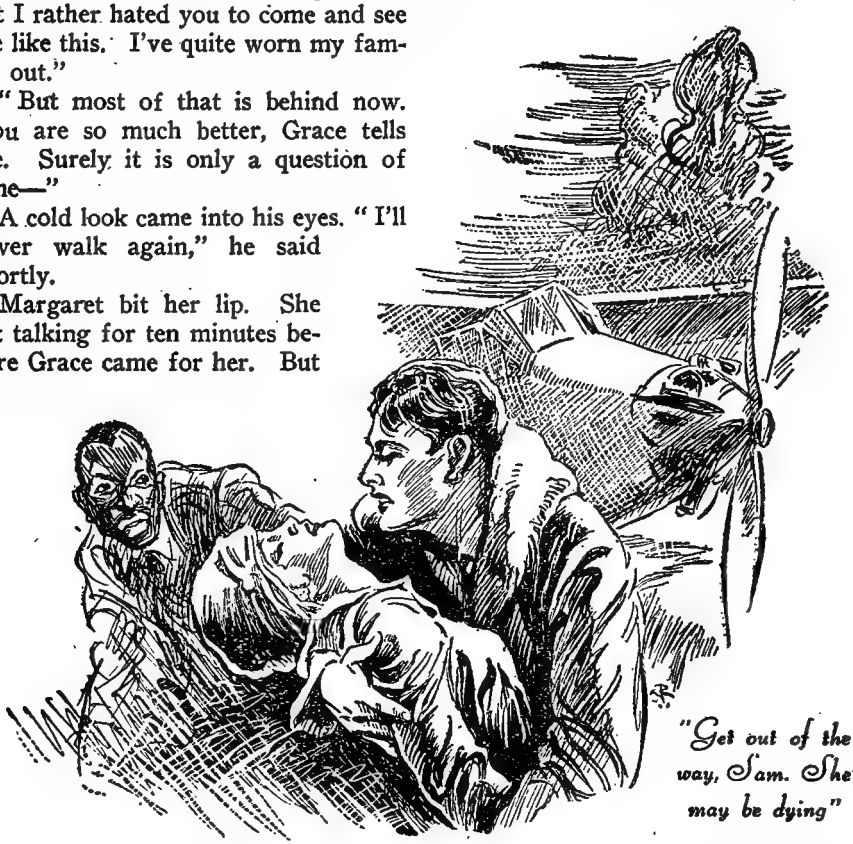
"I wanted to show off. I used to envy you so when you talked about flying. I wanted you to see how well I fly."

"I have been watching the clock ever since Grace read me your telegram saying you were coming. And yet I rather hated you to come and see me like this. I've quite worn my family out."

"But most of that is behind now. You are so much better, Grace tells me. Surely it is only a question of time—"

A cold look came into his eyes. "I'll never walk again," he said shortly.

Margaret bit her lip. She sat talking for ten minutes before Grace came for her. But the nearness, the closeness, was gone. It was as if he had closed a door between them.



"Get out of the way, Sam. She may be dying"

DAY by day Margaret put off her departure. Most of the time she spent with Jack. But the warmth of his first greeting was gone. He grew more and more listless.

True, she sometimes felt him looking at her with that first pleading look, but when she turned and faced him there was that cold, shut door expression in his eyes.

"The doctors say some shock might get him out of himself," Grace confided to her in the big guest room upstairs.

"But how can you shock any one who has no feeling? He lies there like a log. I don't believe he cares a snap of his finger for any one of us, not even mother."

After Grace had gone, Margaret stood staring out of the window unseeingly. A shock! They kept him so calm, so quite.

Suppose she should go to him when he was alone, tear away all barriers,

tell him how she loved him, nothing else in the world mattered to her but him, beg him to marry her.

Her finger nails dug deep into her palms. If he had one spark of feeling for her—maybe—but her pride? What did pride matter!

She touched her hair with her fingers, drew a lace negligee around her and resolutely opened the door. There was dead silence in the hall. The whole household must be asleep. She tiptoed with beating heart through the dark corridors.

At last she stood by the door that led into Jack's room. With shaking fingers she tapped.

"Who is it?" came in surprised tones.

She turned the knob and went into the room.

"Why, Margaret, what's the matter?"

She was glad the night light was turned low, for she knew her cheeks were burning. She went over and sat on the edge of the bed, taking one of Jack's big hands in hers. It was cool and lifeless.

"Listen, Jack, I have to go away. I have stayed days longer than I should. But, before I go, there is something I want to tell you. I love you, Jack. I have always loved you."

"Margaret, what are you saying?"

"I want to marry you, I'll never be happy unless I marry you."

She had said it. The ticking of the clock in the silent room was like knife thrusts. Why didn't he speak?

"DID you hear me, Jack? I love you. I want to marry you."

How white the boy was! He covered her mouth with his free hand.

"Hush, Margaret, you don't know what you are saying! I won't let you say it. I'm not a man—only a helpless log." His mouth twisted.

"Tell me, Jack, I've got to know. It has nearly killed me not knowing all of these years. Do you love me? Have you ever loved me? If you love me, you are bound to get well."

"Margaret, I had better not answer."

Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

She slipped to her knees and put her arms around him. The soft lace of her negligee touched his cheek. He pushed it aside.

"Jack, tell me. Don't be so cruel. You owe me that for all the years I have loved you. Do you know I never fly without the feeling that you are by my side breathing the air, breaking through the clouds with me? I love you so, Jack, I love you so! Put your arms around me. Tell me that you love me, too. What does it matter if you never walk? We will always have each other. I love you so!"

How still he lay! Almost as if he were dead. The ticking of that clock! She had failed, then. It must be that he had never loved her. This must be grief for Bess, or—as Grace had said—he had no feeling.

"Forgive me, Jack, I see I made a mistake. This is good-by, dear."

For a moment her head rested on his breast. When she rose, all the despair had gone from her face. There was only determination.

"Jack, you may never see me after to-morrow. I want you to do one thing for me. I want you to go up in the air with me at daybreak."

"Margaret, how can I?"

"Your boy, Sam, and I will manage with Lieutenant Godwin's help. We will take his cabin plane. No one else will know."

"It's impossible!"

"Only this one little thing, Jack. It's all I ask."

She touched him gently on the forehead and was gone.

SHE and the negro boy, Sam, did manage, with the blue roadster and Lieutenant Godwin's help. The sun was barely peeping out from behind the hills when the big monoplane took off straight into the wind, Margaret in the pilot seat and Jack propped in the seat behind.

Up, up they climbed, flying east, toward the rising sun.

"Isn't it glorious?" Margaret shouted over the roar of the engine, glancing over her shoulder. But her voice could not carry above the hum of the motor. She saw his lips move, and the expression of his face troubled her.

Her face was very white, her mouth a straight, determined line. She sent the plane higher—higher. Suddenly her head fell back, the joy stick clutched to her breast.

"Jack, help! My heart! I'm going to faint." She knew he could not hear her, but the gestures she made were unmistakable.

The plane was flying straight up.

For an awful moment there was no movement, no sound behind her. She had failed. In another minute the plane would stall. Without a guiding hand it would dash to the earth. What did it matter?

Margaret's arms hung inertly at her side. Then she felt hands on her shoulders. *He had moved!*

"Quick, Margaret, the stick—your engine. We will stall!"

Her only answer was to slump farther down in her seat.

"My God, she'll be killed!" came in Jack's agonized voice.

There was a sudden stillness. The engines were dead. She felt herself lifted, thrust into the back seat.

Not a moment too soon, for the plane had flipped off and was heading straight down in a tail spin.

Through veiled eyes she saw Jack stagger, catch hold of the pilot seat and pull himself into it. His hand clutched the stick. His foot was on the control pedal.

The engine roared as he threw the control with the spin— Zoom—up again. The tail spin was broken. The plane leveled off.

They were safe! And it was Jack's guiding hand that was bringing them to earth. He hadn't failed her! Margaret shut her eyes and rested limply against the seat.

On the field a terrified Lieutenant Godwin, with Sam at his heels, ran to meet them.

"What happened? I thought you were falling—" he stopped, aghast at the sight of Jack in the pilot's seat. Sam's eyes were nearly popping out of his head. His black face was ashy, his knees wobbled.

"Fo' God, Massa Jack, you's been walkin' up dere in de air!"

But Jack was deaf to both of them.

"Quick, bring the roadster. It's Margaret. Something dreadful has happened to her heart. I must get her to the hospital."

His arms were around her! He himself was lifting her out! Dear, dear Jack!

Lieutenant Godwin hurried for the car. Her head rested on Jack's shoulder.

Sam tugged at her. "Let me tote her, Mr. Jack. You'll kill you's self. You done forgit you cain't walk."

But Jack pushed him aside with his elbow. "Get out of the way, Sam,

I haven't time to fool with not being able to walk. She may be dying."

His arms tightened around her.

THE next minute she and Jack were alone. speeding away toward the city. Her head rested against his arm.

In a secluded bend of the road she stirred, opened her eyes. He glanced down at her anxiously.

"Jack," she whispered.

"Margaret, dearest!"

He stopped the car, caught her up in his arms.

"Are you all right, my darling?" he asked. "How you frightened me! If anything had happened to you!—I love you so. I've loved you since the first minute I laid eyes on you. Last night it was all I could do not to be a cad and let you know that I loved you."

Margaret nestled her cheek against his. "But you did let me know, you couldn't help it."

"Dearest, what do you mean?"

"When I put my face down on your breast I felt your heart beating so fast, so loud, and I knew. Oh, Jack, how happy it made me!"

"Margaret!"

"Right then I made up my mind that since you wouldn't marry me as you were, I would find some way to cure you or else die with you," she ended in a whisper.

He held her at arm's length, looking at her suspiciously.

"Then you really didn't—"

"What does it matter? What does anything matter except that we are here—safe out of the clouds together?"

Slowly he drew her to him, closer, closer.

"Safe out of the clouds together," he repeated softly, "together always."

And his lips met hers.

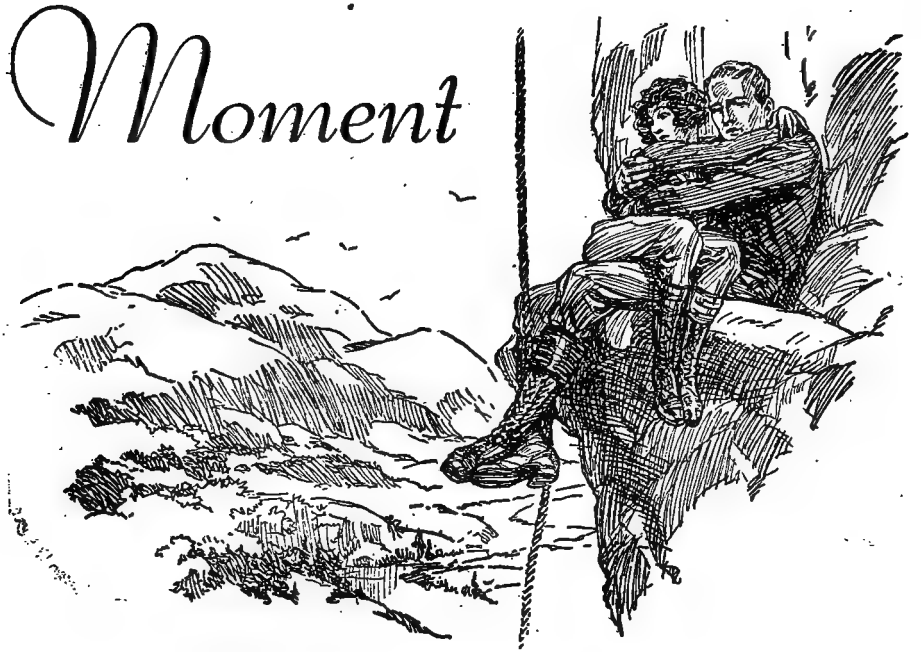
Love's Giving

MY thoughts are yours;
My moods, each one.
I give you the night;
I give you the sun.

I give you the world
And the moon and the sea.
But a small return
They still must be
For the worlds on worlds
You have given me!

—*Mary Carolyn Davies*

One Supreme Moment



Does any man ever really know the heart of a woman?

By Ethel LeCompte

JEAN stopped in the middle of a sentence and looked up at her companion angrily. "Howard Winthrop," she scolded, "you've not paid the least attention to what I've been saying."

Howard grinned down at her. "Never do when you preach the gospel of life according to your esteemed aunt," he returned. "Women have had the vote for years; so why all the palaver? Personally, I think they stepped down from their pedestal quite a bit since they got it. Please, darling, don't spoil our evening. I'm too entranced watching the things a setting sun can do to riotous russet curls to bother whether—"

"To bother whether there's a brain under them or not," cut in Jean. "It's tragic to be so little and frivolous-looking when I have a real message to give to the women of the world."

"Let that six-foot aunt of yours

take care of the women of the world, sweet," Howard advised, smiling tenderly at the lovely little spitfire that paced the flower-bordered path at his side. "I'm asking you for the forty-ninth time to be my wife. Make that message a personal one just for me; tell *me* what ails *me*."

"I'll tell you what ails you right now," flared Jean. "You're hopelessly old-fashioned. As you say, women have the vote, but there are still men who have to be convinced that woman is man's equal in every way; that there is nothing a man can do that a woman cannot do. Aunt Ada has devoted her life to the cause, and, as I owe everything to her, I must carry on as she has trained me."

"Great guns!" exploded Howard. "That dour old maid ought to be ducked and then gagged for life."

"How dare you!" gasped Jean, face flushed, eyes emitting blue lightning. "Don't you ever speak to me again."

Howard caught her arm as she turned to flee and held it firmly. "Now, you listen to me, Jean. I'm not going to force myself on you if you don't want me to, but I do forbid you to try to climb 'The Spire,' as you say you intend doing. No woman—"

"You forbid me!" flared Jean. "Who *do* you think you are?"

"Man enough to stop you from committing suicide," he retorted, stung by the sarcastic tone. "Where is Miss Brownell?"

"On the porch. See what *she* has to say about your before-the-Flood ideas, Mr. Noah!"

Howard turned on his heel and strode up the path to the Mountain House. Jean pattered along at his side, taking three steps to his one. As they neared the porch he looked down at her with a grin on his wide mouth.

"It—it's these high heels," stammered Jean, rightly interpreting his glance. "You certainly are a pig, Howard Winthrop."

"Rather a skinny one," laughed Howard good-naturedly.

"Ah, good evening, Miss Brownell," he greeted that lady. "Your niece tells me you intend climbing 'The Spire' to-morrow."

"'The Spire'!" gasped Miss Brownell.

"He had the impudence to say that a woman could never scale 'The Spire,'" explained Jean hastily, giving her aunt a meaningful glance. "In fact, I've been listening for an hour to his gloating because he reached the top of 'The Spire,' and, also, to his opinion of women in general and us two in particular."

"Men of your type—" began Miss Brownell.

"I admit that you and Jean are great mountain climbers," Howard cut in; "but let me tell you that being led by guides up regular paths in the Alps, where footholds have been cut, is one thing, and scaling, without benefit of guides, perpendicular, rocky crags that boast only natural footholds, is another. Oh, quite another. Thousands of people, not to mention an army, have crossed the Alps, but only two have reached the top of 'The Spire.'"

"We'll make it four!" snapped Miss Brownell. "Come, Jean, we must get to bed if we are to be up before dawn."

"WHAT'S this about 'The Spire'?" demanded Miss Brownell when the two women had reached their suite. "We intended climbing Mount Kelso, and that's enough for me."

"Oh, his boasting about what men in general can do, and what he and his

precious Jack Evans did in particular, made me see red," explained Jean, not hesitating to exaggerate. "They two climbed 'The Spire' together last year, y' know. Of course I had to take up the challenge!"

"Uh-huh," was the cryptic answer. Miss Brownell was standing at the window, looking through field glasses at "The Spire." "Climbing to the top of Mount Kelso will be enough to make us famous," she opined.

"But not enough to show that 'he-man'!"

"From here the darn thing appears to have the general build of Bunker Hill Monument!" declared Miss Brownell. "I'm not a goat, my dear."

"Two men climbed it, so— Oh, well, when we get to the top of Mount Kelso you'll see that 'The Spire' can be scaled by women. They've just made a bugaboo out of it to scare us."

Jean and her aunt were ready for their climb before dawn the next morning. Jean looked like a handsome, graceful boy in her riding breeches, boots and sweater; Miss Brownell like a rather bulky English squire ready for a day with the hounds. Just as they had finished breakfast, Howard Winthrop burst into the dining room and came directly to their table.

"If you are so all-fired set on doing this fool stunt," he began without any preliminary greeting, "I'm going with you as guide. Just gimme time to snatch a bite—"

"We are starting this minute," cut in Miss Brownell.

"We need no guide," added Jean.

"I'll come along—catch up with you—I—"

"Catch up with us indeed!" frothed Miss Brownell. "I guess we can cover the ground as quickly as you can, young man."

Howard glanced down at Jean's feet. She thrust out one in its laced boot and gave him what can be termed nothing more or less than a "dirty look."

"I suppose you expected me to go in the gown and pumps I wore last night," she drawled.

"Even that wouldn't surprise me," returned Howard sulkily.

ON the porch the landlord was waiting with their knapsacks containing lunch. He also had a rope, an anxious expression, and advice.

"I beg of you to let Mr. Winthrop guide you," he said.

"We need no man's help!" snapped Jean and her aunt together. Jean frowned fiercely.

They waved airy farewells, and swung down the path to the trail that led to Mount Kelso, from the crown of which reared "The Spire."

They were experienced and excellent climbers. Noon found them at the base of "The Spire." After a rest, they opened their knapsacks and ate ravenously but in silence.

Jean relaxed for a moment.

"Well, Jeanie, we did it!" exulted Miss Brownell, lighting her after luncheon cigarette, and settling back against a rock.

"Did it!" echoed Jean. "Why, the worst is yet to come."

"You don't imagine for one minute that I'm going to try *that!*" Miss Brownell indicated the towering monolith above them. "Why, I'd as lief try to shinny up the Washington Monument from the outside!"

"Let's take a look at the other side," suggested Jean.

This Miss Brownell agreed to do, but when they got there she spoke:

"Not even a goat could climb that—it *overhangs!*"

"Wait a minute," begged Jean; "let me study this a bit. See how 'The Spire' divides into two parts about a hundred feet up? There are footholds up to that division, and then we could—"

"Take just one drop too many," chortled Miss Brownell. "That smaller pinnacle looks like Cleopatra's Needle, though not nearly so reliable. Why, one person's weight would topple the darn thing over!"

"Don't be silly, Aunt Ada," retorted Jean impatiently. "It has stood for ages, in storm and wind, and weighs tons and tons. A hundred pounds, more or less—"

"My couple of hundred are not going to trust themselves up there. Why are you so anxious to act the giddy goat anyway?"

Jean ignored the epithet. "I've got to show that boaster, Howard Winthrop," she declared. "I'll start up alone and climb as far as the fissure, then lower the rope and help haul you up."

"Well, go ahead then, but for Heaven's sake be careful."

Jean instinctively found just the right footholds, grasped just the right ledges, and climbed with uncanny speed. Reaching the spot where "The Spire" divided, she stopped and began to uncoil the rope.

"I'm staying right here," her aunt's voice floated up to her. "You come back down!"

For answer Jean recoiled the rope and took a step—up!

"Jean!" cried her aunt, "come back!"

Looking down, Jean waved airily and continued to mount the larger of the two obelisks. Her daring made for exultation, and she felt not the least fear nor even weariness.

SUDDENLY she halted. From below came voices. She looked down. There stood Howard Winthrop and her aunt, side by side, waving and shouting in the most idiotic manner. Spurred by her resentment at his following her, Jean began to climb again with added speed and recklessness.

It was rather dim and ghostly in there between the two great pinnacles, and the climber thought of "Dracula," snakes, vampire bats, and other cheerful things. As she ascended, the ledges grew smaller and smaller, until her slender fingers could find hardly a place to grip, and her small feet had difficulty in finding toe holds. She swung halfway around. The ledges on the other wall were larger. Without a second thought she stepped across.

She could, she decided, call it a day when she reached the summit of this pinnacle, or swing back to "The Spire" itself and keep going. Slowly and with greater caution she proceeded. At times she found room for only one hand, again was forced to balance on one foot. Her heavy gloves had worn through long ago, and now her hands began to bleed. Her whole body ached and her breath came with difficulty.

"Jean, stop!" Howard's voice commanded.

He was actually following her up "The Spire." She was quite near the top of the lesser peak now, and she stopped to look down. Had she really scaled that sheer slab of rock? Never could she descend it! Her heart gave a queer leap and her ears buzzed. For the first time she felt worried.

Suddenly the pillar of rock to which she clung trembled—or did she imagine it? Just dizziness, probably, she reassured herself. Nevertheless, she had best rest a moment longer—if clinging desperately to a precarious perch may be called resting.

Howard was gaining on her. His voice grew nearer each time he hailed her, but she was beyond caring about his overtaking her now, for she knew that the obelisk was really trembling.

Real fear clutched at her heart. She looked back at the other wall, but it seemed absolutely smooth just at this height. She glanced up. Between her and the slit of blue sky jutted a huge arm of rock, but whether it was part of the larger or part of the smaller obelisk she could not be sure. A few more desperate steps showed her that it was as she hoped, part of the main spire. If she could manage to reach that, she could tie the rope and lower herself until she found that series of ledges on the other wall.

Her objective was just below the summit of the smaller pinnacle. She halted on a ledge that was a bit wider than most and slipped the rope from her shoulder. There was a loop at one end. How she did it she never knew, but, at her first attempt, the loop lassoed the jutting rock. A long breath later she scrambled onto it herself—her arms pulling her up and her feet pushing hard against the opposite wall.

There she clung, flat on her face, eyes closed, heart beating to suffocation. From below came a grinding noise—or was it only the blood pounding in her ears? Again it came, and with it Howard's voice shrieking to her to get back onto the bigger spire.

"I am," she screamed back. She opened her eyes and saw that he was not far below her. She saw, too, that the rock she had just left was rocking back and forth. That was it, came the reassuring thought: this was a gigantic rocking stone such as she had seen in miniature in various parks. A touch of the finger would start them swaying, but they never lost their balance.

BUT the grinding noise grew louder, more menacing. Suddenly there was a sharp crack! The swaying rock shuddered and toppled toward her, its topmost peak striking the other spire only a few feet below her. With a mighty roar, like that of an angry animal cheated of its prey, it crashed down, sideswiping "The Spire" and planing it clean of all footholds.

Jean's perch held! But it was of Howard that she thought first. Howard crushed between those awful jaws! In a flash she realized that life without Howard was not worth while. She unclasped her arms from around the rock and let herself fall forward.

As she fell, her hands mechanically caught at the dangling rope. She slid about twenty feet and landed with a thud on a small platform that the shadow of the fallen rock had hidden when she ascended. Though only about a foot and a half deep and three feet wide, it seemed like a cave after the ledges to which she had trusted herself. Still clinging to the rope, she lay flat, weeping her heart out.

Quietness had come again to the mountains; the tons of rock that had fallen had found resting places. Even the echoes had ceased.

"Howard! Howard!" she moaned. "I've killed you!"

"Pretty darn near it," gasped a voice.

With a cry of mixed terror and relief she sat up. To the rock that

formed the floor of her refuge clung Howard!

It was but the work of a moment to get the rope into his hand. Slowly he dragged himself up over the edge and slumped forward into her arms. With a sob she clutched him close to her heart. His breath came in gasps that showed he had been taxed to the very limit of his strength. She felt his whole body pulsating with the pounding blood.

"Howard—darling — darling," she crooned.

He looked up at her. Little, comforting sounds came from his lips. Presently he shifted until he had *his* arms around *her*.

"Well, here we are!" he found his voice at last. He even managed a grin. "Oh, I say, you're not going to turn on the weeps at this late hour, are you?"

"Oh, it was terrible—terrible. I thought you—oh!"

"But it's over, and I haven't, so cheer up," he advised. "What d' y' mean, kicking down mountains?"

"How can you joke about it?" sobbed Jean. "Those rocks may have fallen on Aunt Ada."

"No such luck," groaned Howard. "Oh, don't look like that, sweetie, I'm joking again. They fell on the other side. Don't worry about her. Think of us, perched up here, and not a pair of wings between us!"

"There's the rope," suggested Jean.

"There's an awful drop between the end of it and anything else. However, after we rest a while, I may be able to loosen it from above and let it down. It may possibly reach that big bowlder."

"Howard, you must save yourself somehow," cried Jean hysterically. "I deserve to die, but you—"

"What kind of talk is that? Be careful, woman, we're in a cave, y' know, and I may start caveman stuff any minute."

"You should have done that long ago and not let me climb up here," sobbed Jean.

"WELL, I'll be switched!" He gave a low whistle. "You're a sure enough female person after all, bless your heart." He caught the rope between his feet, thus gaining the use of his two hands, and lifted Jean bodily onto his lap. "Thank goodness, I know how to manage you at last." His lips found hers and pressed them almost brutally. Her arms tightened around his neck and held him close.

"You do love me, then?" he asked after a while.

"Of course," she retorted. The contact had brought a tinge of color to her blanched face and had reddened her pale lips. In her eyes gleamed the old, courageous light.

"I'm not afraid now," she told him. "You don't have to joke any longer in order to soothe me. How—long—have—we?"

"God knows, beloved!" he returned gravely. "But it will be together!"

"Yes, together," she repeated quietly.

"My brave darling," he murmured.

After that they were quiet for a long time. Jean felt strangely numb, as if some merciful drug had been instilled into her veins and had dulled her senses. It seemed fantastic that one could await death so calmly. From time to time they changed positions, easing their aching bodies, and took turns at holding the rope. Two small fingerholds in the wall of their cave helped a bit.

"They're a long time sending that plane," murmured Howard, with another attempt at cheerfulness.

"This is not a moving picture." Jean smiled up at him. Then her voice changed. "Wouldn't it be better—easier—to—let go?" she whispered.

"Perhaps—" he agreed dully. "But, no, no! What am I saying? We are forgetting the rope. Hold my belt and the rope while I look up and see what the chances are of loosening it."

Without a word she obeyed.

"If you could hold my belt and that little cranny, I might be able to get the loop off," he reported.

"But there's nothing here to which we could fasten the rope."

"I would hold it while you slid down," he explained.

"How will you follow?"

"I'll find a way," he evaded.

"I shall not leave you. I *will* not!" she protested wildly.

"You will do as I say!" he told her grimly. "First, I'll try to enlarge this crevice so that you can get a good hold." He worked steadily with his big clasp knife while she held his belt and the rope. The rock was hard but flaky. A little judicious prodding loosened several large pieces.

"There, that's better," Howard said. "You can hold— Look!"

Wide-eyed, they stared at the opening that the last jab of his knife had made. With the handle Howard tapped the surrounding stone. It sounded hollow!

Frantically he worked to enlarge the hole. Soon he could get his hand inside. A lighted match held inside the opening was snuffed out immediately.

"A draft!" he exulted. "There must be another opening."

All this time Jean had not spoken a word. Her throat felt as if it had been closed by a strangling hand. Her fingers seemed paralyzed. But she must hold him and not let him know how near the end of her strength she was.

He was working steadily, desperately now, hammering with a large piece of stone that had broken off, to save his knife blade as much as possible, for it had worn away alarmingly.

"I'll have to rest a bit now," he panted, turning and taking her in his arms. "Lean back on me, beloved. Relax."

THAT short respite restored her wonderfully.

"Now, back to the old grind! Whistle's blowing!" There was a ring of hope in his light words. "Hold the rope with both hands. I'm going to take a look at this tunnel I'm making."

Striking a match, he cupped it with both hands and thrust it into the opening. "Can't see a thing but blackness," he told her.

"Let me help," offered Jean, picking up a piece of stone.

"That's the idea!" encouraged Howard.

Jean found it quite a relief to exert herself after sitting idle and cramped for so long. Finally the hole was large enough for Howard to get his head and shoulders inside. Squirming back again he reported that he had discerned a dim light far below.

He cut a length of rope—no use to risk one's life to get it all—and tied one end around Jean's waist and the other around his own. Lowering himself into the hole, he found a good foothold and then lifted Jean in also.

Before he put her down he strained her close to his breast. In the darkness their lips met in a long kiss. "I'd like to carry you all the way, darling,"

he murmured. "But it is much safer if we both walk. Can you see that glimmer of light away down there?"

"Yes—oh, yes. I'm glad it's down instead of up," she laughed shakily. "I'm not keen on climbing any more to-day."

They made their cautious way toward the opening. At times they were forced to crawl on hands and knees. They slid down smooth slabs of stone or stepped carefully over jagged points of rock.

"What a weird place it is," commented Jean. "It will be good to get out into the sunlight again."

"Won't be long now," Howard sang out. "Here we are!"

They stepped out onto a broad ledge not far above Mount Kelso proper. The sun was just sinking below the horizon. Its last rays "did things to riotous russet curls."

"Safe, Golden Girl, safe!" exulted Howard. "How brave you were!"

Jean pushed away his seeking hands. "Brave?" she repeated. "Foolish, you mean. Oh, hear that shouting! They've come to rescue us, I suppose. They've come to take us back."

Howard caught Jean to him. Gripped by a sudden fear that that which the shadow of death had given him might be snatched away by life, he demanded: "Back to—what, Jean?"

"To all that life can give!" she cried, her eyes shining. "To love and"—she dropped her eyes and folded her hands in mock demureness—"and even the tyranny of an old-fashioned husband!"

Ring in the New!

DEAR heart, amid the clamoring of bells,
That fling their minstrelsy into the skies,
Where Beauty walks with stars and asphodels,
I watch the Old Year go with tear-dimmed eyes;
For, when there was no singing and no mirth,
When all the fragrant roses turned to rue,
Lo, heaven thrilled amid the ways of earth,
As I groped through the shadows and found you.
And now I greet the New Year with a prayer:
"Though I must walk in paths that bruise my feet,
I will but laugh at anguish and despair,
And living, Lord, will be joyously sweet,
If I shall feel my dear love's fingertips
And drink the fragrant honey of her lips!"

—*Edgar Daniel Kramer.*

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Get out your pen and paper and write a letter to Mrs. Dorothea Dale, care of ALL-STORY magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City. Tell her what kind of friends you are looking for, also describe yourself briefly. Your letter will be published without your full name in an early issue of this magazine and you will receive many replies from other readers also lonely and anxious to make friends.

Make Friends by Mail

Send in your letter to-day and you will see it in print in a few weeks.

Go gle

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts." If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career." For general reading, care "Character Analysis."

You may take advantage of one or any service, but a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found at the end of this department.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

Girls' clubs or organizations in New York or vicinity may secure Mr. Fraser's services for an evening's lecture by addressing him care this magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City.

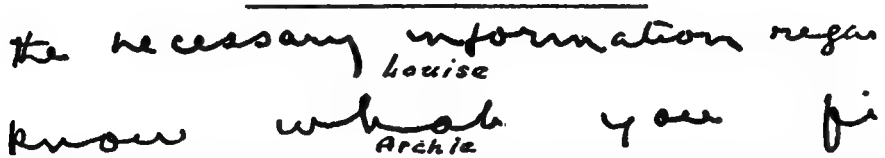
IN the mass of correspondence which comes to me day after day from girls and women all over the world, I find some remarkable samples of handwriting. Readers of ALL-STORY MAGAZINE are above the average in intellect and education, as their writings show.

These letters, however, reveal much more than that. They convince me of the fact that the average girl, despite her abilities, is drifting through her professional life without any chart or compass. The job she is holding down in office, store, or factory is too apt to be only a means of livelihood, instead of being a stepping-stone to a higher and more useful career.

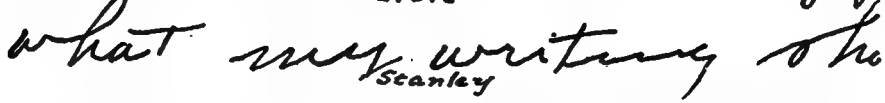
No one of you is justified in following a vocation which is uncongenial to you, when all you've got to do is to write me and let me apply the scientific rules of graphology to your particular handwriting, and determine your ideal vocation.

I'm here for that purpose, so don't hesitate another moment. Do it today!

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS



(Miss Louise G., Washington, D. C.) Both of you have come from superior families. You are a cultured couple, and as a result you would be a great power for good, not only to each other, but to the community you live in. Your sweetheart, Archie, has great leadership qualities. He is a man who looks at life in a big way. His magnanimity and generousness are refreshing. His faculty for making friends is very pronounced, and his artistic temperament something well worth having. I notice neither of you is sentimentally inclined. That is to say, you do your loving in a somewhat matter-of-fact way. Possibly you care a great deal for Archie, and prefer his company to that of any other person in the world, but even in your most romantic moments, there is very little of that womanly spontaneity which characterizes more emotional natures. In looking deeper into your own nature, I discover many little foibles which could be eradicated without detracting one iota from your popularity. For example, why should you be so impulsive and irritable with people who are not as clever as yourself? Don't you think you are a little high-hatty on such occasions? I think you are. Then this love of authority which is written in capital letters all over your disposition is a decided detriment to your success as a member of society, as well as a wife. A persistent and obstinate streak is visible here and there in your penmanship, along with a quick and fiery temper. But I think you two young people would be happy if married.



(Miss Elsie C., Chicago, Ill.) As far as I can see, you are a well mated pair. That is to say, you two young folk could get married to-morrow, and I would have no qualms as to your future happiness. Both of you have been blessed with a good deal of common sense. Perhaps you have a little more than Stanley has. He makes up for it in another way, so when you balance accounts, it's a fifty-fifty proposition. The reason why I'm enthusiastic about

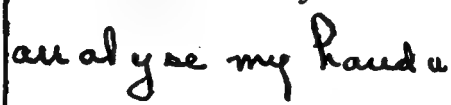
your union is that you are both of the same temperament. Both of you gravitate to the better and more spiritual things in life. Your tastes are pretty much like Stanley's. His hobbies harmonize with yours, and what is his will is your pleasure. Of course, all these things are very lovely and make the wheels of matrimony go around easily, but both you and Stanley have several "little foxes" that kill the vines. In other words, you have inherent traits which, if not guarded, could do infinite harm to your home happiness. For example, your sweetheart is very vindictive and revengeful. He is not given very much to forgiving and forgetting. His natural impulse is to come back with a little more than he got himself. Another thing I see about him is that he is opinionative. As you are aware, he is a great talker, and a man who swears by what he thinks. You, on the other hand, have a mean temper when you don't get just what you want. You get moody and irritable when some one disappoints you. There is still a lot of the baby about you, and nothing pleases you better than to be molly-coddled. Despite these characteristics, however, there is no reason why you should not get married and be extremely well satisfied with each other.

Since I was one of those "left out" at
Jane
tag several hundred men a year
Andrew

(Miss Jane C., Fargo, N. D.) I consider you a very fortunate girl in having such a young man around you. My opinion is that Andrew is a very steady, conscientious fellow. He is sufficiently sentimental to make you feel that the time you are together is well spent and profitable to you both. It is true that he is a business man down to his finger tips, but he is of the type who can leave their business in the office. Of course, your nature is entirely different from Andrew's. For example, you are analytical. Small things interest you much more than they do Andrew. Your home would be the acme of neatness and cleanliness. You would always be very particular about the propriety of this, that or the other thing. You would be a stickler for etiquette, and a constant terror to one whose table manners were not of the best. Despite all these things, however, your tastes and your sweetheart's blend pretty well. You are both fond of music and reading. You gravitate to the better things in life. The quietness of home life appeals much more to you than the garish allurements of the night club. You believe in putting the real things first in your scheme of life. In scrutinizing your characters a little closer, I find you are inclined to get moody and irritable without much cause, while Andrew has an overbearing manner now and then. His opinion would have to be the final word, and his temper would be anything but angelic. These traits, however, should not keep you from being very happy and contented when married.

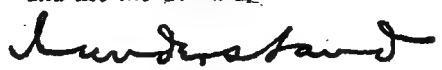
Do You Write Like This?

A backhand penmanship such as this indicates that you are—



cold and austere in your manner. Uncharitably inclined. Rather conceited about your book knowledge, and not easy to live with at times.

If you tie your words together and use the Greek E—



you are sure to have a quick-working mind. Rather cultured and flirtatious, as well as being a good mixer. You give special attention to small things, and are generous with your money.

Shaded writing always shows business ability—

It shows you have been gifted with business ability. You are very sentimental, and possess great imaginative power. A good-natured sort of person, and one who likes good music and beautiful poetry.

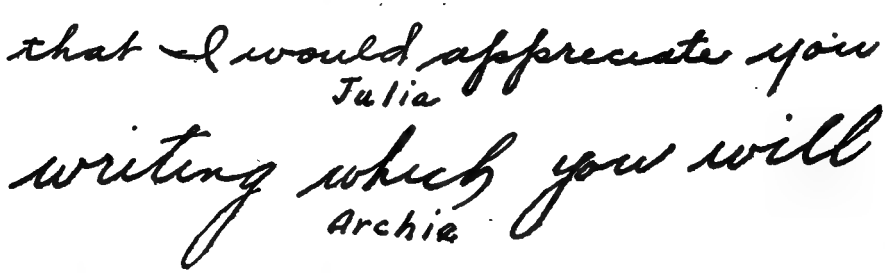
Or Like This?

Small handwriting with short loops above and below the line—

shows you have a very narrow outlook on life. You are fussy about unimportant things. You are mentally lazy, and will never amount to much in the business world.

Do you make a "g" like the figure 8?—

If so, you speak very fast as well as think quickly when some problem confronts you. When the letter "g" is made like the figure 8, it shows that your mind is traveling a mile a minute.



(Miss Julia S., Lincoln, Neb.) I notice a great difference between Archie's disposition and your own. You are poles apart when it comes to likes and dislikes. You are a hot-house plant, while he belongs to the sturdy out-of-door variety. There is no question that your boy friend has

all the earmarks of a go-ahead fellow, a man who has both business ability and a big outlook on life. The type of fellow who believes in calling a spade a spade—a chap with the courage of his convictions, whether he is in the midst of friends or enemies. I would imagine Archie to be very obstinate when he makes up his mind to do something. He would have a daredevil way of doing things. A fellow who would take a chance; whether it be in an automobile or in the stock market. A talker, and a convincing one at that. You, on the other hand, are very sensitive and easily upset. You are a peace-loving girl, talkative on certain subjects and very dumb on others. One topic which is too often uppermost in your mind is—yourself! You are far too fond of using the pronoun "I." A woman egotist like yourself, Julia, reminds me of another type of girl—the automobile speedster who will some day drive up to the Gate of Heaven and honk. Stop being so self-important; get away from your little self, and you'll be more beloved and respected. I question very much whether you would make an ideal wife and helpmeet to Archie. At least you don't qualify for that position right now. You would be all the better to take a little of your sweetheart's philosophy to heart, and get away from these narrow views which at present dominate your thinking.

YOUR CAREER

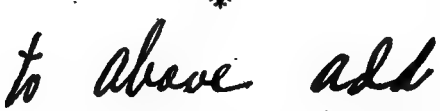
This is a specimen

(Miss Irene S., Pittsburgh, Pa.) You impress me as a girl who is, first and last, go-ahead and full of business. You have great will power and determination of purpose, coupled with a faculty for making friendships. You have an urge within you to get on in the world; an ambitious and optimistic nature which drives you to bigger and better ideals all the time. I have no hesitation in saying that you are fitted for a position which would give your leadership qualities full play. To be a hostess in an exclusive restaurant, or, better still, to run a tea-room of your own, would not be beyond your capabilities. Either of these positions would bring you in contact with desirable people, and enable you to broaden your outlook on life. Your work as hostess would serve as an apprenticeship to the more responsible work as proprietor of your own place. And, in the latter, your imaginative power would come in handy, since imagination, foresight, and integrity are the three foundation stones of every business. You've got the three of them along with a good supply of common sense and uncommon sense. I've got a word of warning to give you, and that is, don't be so impatient. You lack self-control, and in consequence are a little apt to "get off the handle" too quickly. Despite that, however, I see great possibilities in you.

and have us

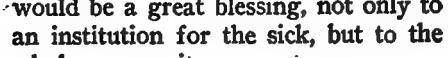
(Miss Daisy W., Salina, Kan.) Your quiet, thoughtful way of going through life has its advantages. You belong to the type of folk who take time to live. Most of us only know how to exist. You are an individual who could never be rushed into any proposition that you had no use for: no slick salesman could play on your sensibilities with much success. You are cold and calculating most of the

time. When it comes to advising you about a career, there are many opportunities for one with talents and traits such as yours. I am confident you could, in a very short time, prove yourself invaluable in the nursing profession. Though you are reserved, self-restrained, and sometimes severe in your manner, you are far from being "hard-boiled." Behind a rather cold exterior, you have a warm heart and a genuinely sincere nature. Patience is a virtue with you, and sober earnestness one of your mainstays. Physically, you are specially fitted for arduous and exacting work, and your nerve-force is sufficient to stand anything you might be called upon to do in the course of your duties. Though you are a well educated girl and capable of doing good work in the commercial world, I cling to the opinion that you are a born nurse and, as such, would be a great blessing, not only to an institution for the sick, but to the whole community.



(Miss Georgina B., Edmonton, Ala.) It is very evident to me that you have had a splendid education. Every scratch of your pen says louder than words that you are destined for some responsible position in the professional world. Your power of penetration, and your faculty for deliberation all tell me that you are cut out for a lawyer. In addition to these traits you have an abundance of judgment which happens to be of the right kind. This is more than can be said of some of your sisters who look down their noses with the wisdom of owls, and lack that quality altogether. Your fluency of speech will stand you in good stead in the legal profession. You are quite a talker and, I would imagine, a convincing one. You seem to carry with you the coat-of-arms of your Scottish forbears — dogmatic will power, and an obstinacy which is unshakable. Scotch thriftiness also runs rampant in that girlish nature of yours. With all your educational ability, however, you are not all head and no heart. There is a deal of genuine sentiment in your nature. No one could ever call you a hard-boiled lawyer, or an unscrupulous woman of affairs. On the contrary, you are extremely well poised, and can temper judgment with mercy. Your handwriting was a pleasure to analyze, and, Georgina, I wish you all kinds of luck for your future success.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS



(Miss B. T., Syracuse, N. Y.) You have been blessed with great inherent ability. It is of little consequence what you make up your mind to do, you are likely to make a success of it. You are a very modest sort of girl, and would never be guilty of urging your good points on others. I would say that you were clear-minded and unassuming. Much more conventional than radical in your ideas. I notice you lean toward anything that belongs to the arts, and are a lover of poetry and music. Your cultured tastes enable you to enjoy to the full the beautiful things in life. Commendable as all this undoubtedly is, you are not perfect, of course. For example, I see that you are extremely temperamental. You find no end of things to fret and worry about. Many times you lack initiative, and depend a little too much

on others for stimulus in your undertakings. This in turn has its outcome in annoyance when things don't go just as you expect. It is hard for you to refrain from outbursts against people who bore you. For the most part, as I have already indicated, you are unassuming in your manner, but there are times when you break loose and like to have authority. You want to impress others with your superiority. Of course, that might be called a feminine foible, but it isn't exactly a nice one, so I would advise you to "be yourself" next time you are tempted to carry your chin a little higher than it ought to be.

Let me hear

(Miss J. A. W., Los Angeles, Cal.)

You seem to have a habit of spending all you have. Nothing gives you greater joy than a visit to some expensive establishment down town to buy pretty things for yourself. You would do well to remember the old adage that "wanton waste makes woeful want." You impress me as a girl who would never be guilty of allowing her emotions to run away with her. You are reserved and cautious in all you do. The kind of girl who would fascinate a man, not so much by what she does as by what she won't do. I would class you with the type that give every man their ear, but few their voice. There is one thing, however, about you that I admire, and that is your straightforward manner. You are the sort of person who can do so much to leaven the dull lump of society from day to day. All in all, you are a girl much above the average at your age, in manners, morals and intellect.

Girls' clubs and organizations in New York and vicinity can secure the services of John Fraser by writing to him care of this magazine. An evening's entertainment and instruction of surpassing interest is provided by Mr. Fraser's analyses.

If you belong to a club suggest to the other members that they set aside a meeting to be addressed by Mr. Fraser. Vocational problems of the members can be solved by having this expert in graphology analyze handwriting specimens. Simply address him care ALL-STORY, 280 Broadway, New York City.

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This coupon is not good after January 11. A stamped addressed envelope must be enclosed when forwarding.

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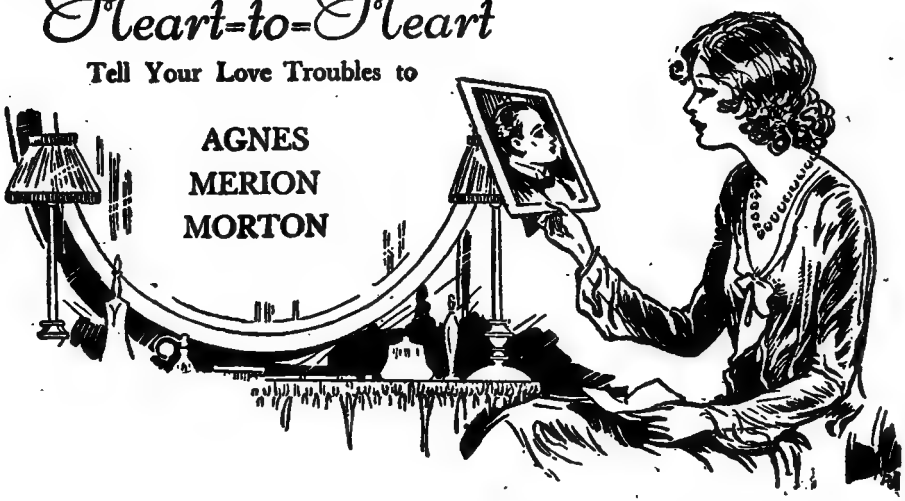

MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

THE echoes of Al Higgins's letter are still reverberating around this office, and since we have a little spare time this week we'll listen to them first.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

"Higgins" is an Irish name, but I would not have believed if I had not read it in your department that an Irishman could be so pig-headed as the one who signs himself Al Higgins is. He seems not only to lack a sense of humor, but every other kind of sense. According to him, it's the worst misfortune that can befall a woman to be divorced from him, whereas I should think any one who had the bad luck to marry him would want to be divorced as soon as possible at any price, and that it would be every maiden's prayer never to meet him.

By the way, I missed the letter from Slave-Wife which he is answering, and my news dealer is all out of old copies. Could you reprint this letter for the benefit of those who did not read it? It seems to have raised a lot of discussion, so must be interesting.

HARVEY O'SHEA.

I cannot reprint the letter, because my space is so limited, but if you send twenty cents to the Circulation Department of this magazine, they will be glad to forward a copy of the issue containing it. Yes, "Higgins" is an Irish name, but perhaps our friend Al signed it instead of his own, or perhaps there is some mixture in his composition. I've never known a full-blooded Irishman who was anything like him. Thanks for your interest, Mr. O'Shea.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I often read your columns and enjoy them, but never gave it a thought to write you un-

til I read Mr. Al Higgins's letter. I am not fortunate (?) enough to know him personally, so I cannot argue with him, but I can write a few lines through you.

I am sure if Mr. Higgins would hesitate for a moment he would realize that he took the same vows and oaths that his wives took. I fear he will never marry again if he expects to find what he says he wants. Why not hire a servant anyway? It would be cheaper.

Instead of laughing at the young couple next door I should think he might understand that they have the happiness and contentment he missed. I have been married three years and have a wonderful husband. We are pals. I discuss my trials with him and he with me, and we help each other all we can in every way. If he was the kind Al Higgins is I would be afraid to say a word. Why do you suppose, Mrs. Morton, that a man thinks it is something to brag about that he is like that? I can only say I pity such a narrow-minded and ignorant man.

ALICE OF TEXAS.

Alice, you and Mr. O'Shea and the others who have written to cross swords with Mr. Higgins will be surprised to find that he is not alone in his opinions. His letter roused a fellow feeling in one breast, at least:

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I think some of your correspondents are pretty rough on Mr. Al Higgins. They go for him hammer and tongs, and certainly he has a right to his opinion as much as anybody. I have never married, and don't intend to, but, personally, I agree with him in his sizing-up of modern women. The females were created merely to be of use to men, and their main purpose is to bear children. Most of them have strayed far enough from their duties nowadays. I envy certain German and Italian men of my acquaintance who can tell their wives to go and do something, and they go and do it. American women are impossible.

My mother was the good old-fashioned type. She had eleven children and kept us and her house neat and nice, and did not think of running here and there and everywhere, and was happy doing her duty, and though she died when we were none of us grown we all honor her to this day. But you don't find women like her any more. Even when they do their housework at all they're lazy about it—want all these new-fangled machines and labor-savers so they can go out and gad.

Mrs. Morton, I dare you to print this letter.

R. OWENS.

I am glad to print your letter, Mr. Owens, but don't blame me if anybody gets after you, too, "hammer and tongs." I wonder if you ever reflected, for instance, on the number of women in the world who have to go to work in order to help their husbands to exist? Perhaps *they* need as many time and labor-savers at home as possible, so as to be released for other work. For example:

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I need your kind advice. I have been married six years to a man I love more than any one in the world. We are at the cross-roads—and I don't know what to do. Please tell me.

We met at college and fell very deeply in love and married at the end of our school year. His people are farmers; I have lived in the city all my life. We went to the oil fields where our new little home burned after we had been there only a few months. We then went back to his father's farm, where we both were very unhappy, but happy in each other. Our first crop failed, debts accumulated, and I got a school to help out. We made good the next year and I still taught. His mother and father made me terribly unhappy, but they are sorry now and seem really to love me.

My husband went to the city to work and stayed with my people, who have always loved him, and I resigned my school and came on later. I went to work in a department store because he was not making more than enough for himself. I have worked ever since—for four years. We have had troubles and misfortunes, quarrels and disappointments, but we have always loved each other.

Then two years ago I had an offer to go on the road and he urged me to go, knowing that I would be away a year. Like a fool I went. Up to this time my husband had flirted a little and drunk a little and had caused me a little heartache, but never anything serious. After I had been away four months he kept writing for me to come home. I was so homesick, and still loving him, so I came back. Shortly after he was crippled with inflammatory rheumatism, so I took him to his father's home in the country, got my school back and taught all last winter. In the spring we came back, got a little furnished house and were so happy for a little while. But his salary was small and we could not pay our debts (mostly doctor's bills) as quickly as we wanted to, so I went to work as an assistant to a very busy doctor.

For the last five months I have been miserable. My husband told me that he did not love me any more, so I went away on a vacation proposed by him. He was in that same mood for two months; then things got better. We met new friends, a couple with children we adored. My husband never seemed satisfied unless we were with them. I believe he

liked my friend too much. Circumstances all point to that. He suddenly decided to leave and find another location. Up to the time he went he told me he was leaving me. Of course, I was desperately hurt.

Then, the evening before he left, he told me he just didn't know what he meant by all the hard things he had said, and that he did love me and would send for me just as soon as he got settled. He asked my forgiveness, explaining that he had said all those hard things to hurt me and make me think he didn't care. The morning he told me goodby he was sincere, I think.

Now, Mrs. Morton, I love my husband, but I want certainty, security, protection. I have worked so hard and have been so hurt by his actions that I don't know what to do. I am not pitying myself, I want to be wise, but I do want him to be punished so that he won't be so eager to say he doesn't love me any more. I haven't heard from him yet —neither have his mother and brother. He has been gone more than two weeks. He took the car I helped pay for with him. I have paid for his clothes, our furniture—in fact, I've helped with everything. I think I have done too much. He told me when he sent for me that he wanted to have a good job so I would not have to work! I want to teach him a lesson, but how? I have tried to make him happy, and he has failed me more than once, but I still love him and am unhappy away from him. Please help me.

ANN MEREDITH.

If Mr. Owens has read this letter I wonder if he can still say that all modern women are parasites, that American women, especially, are "impossible" as wives? And you can't get out of it by saying that this case is an exception. Hundreds and thousands of women in this country are shouldering more than their share of the burden of keeping a home together, and in some cases supporting children as well as themselves.

To you, Ann, what can I say? Only that, for a time at least, you'll have to "keep on keepin' on." It will make it easier if you can uproot that resentment, just though it is, out of your heart. You see, Ann, while you love him, any way you took to "punish" him would react on you. If you refuse to go to him, you will suffer as much as he will, and possibly more. If, when he sends, you go to him but are cold, and let your injuries rankle and make you bitter, a barrier will grow up between you that may turn him to another for comfort. And, again, you would be the sufferer.

He seems to me just an average husband—far, far better than the worst, not ideal, but precious few humans are. A little careless, a little selfish, a little too sure of you. It is inconsiderate, surely, not to write when he must know you are anxious, but Old Man Pride may be standing in his way there. He does not want to write until he can let you know he is on the road to success.

He has had a run of bad luck—illness and failure for which he was not responsible. I believe that luck will turn, and that you can help it do so by trusting him. I have heard of many miracles that were worked by faith, Ann, but never of one that was worked by doubt and reproaches and "punishing." Life is not secure nor easy for most of us. Woman has insisted on her rights to equality with man, so she must face life shoulder to shoulder with him. And life is a struggle—a battle, a turmoil—sweetened occasionally and made worth while by such interludes of love as you have known and will know again.

I hope you will be able to write another letter some day and tell us that the next chapter makes happier reading than the last.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am in a great difficulty. I wonder if you won't uphold me in the stand I've taken. I'm a widow and have only one son. My firstborn died at camp during the war. Shortly after, my husband died of the flu. Before he died he made our other son, who was then sixteen, promise never to leave me while I needed him.

Well, I worked hard for years to keep him in school and send him to college. I used all the insurance money for his expenses and supported myself by dressmaking. He is now

twenty-seven and has a fair position, and I had begun to think I could give up my work and have a little rest at last, just keeping house for him, when—along came a girl, of course. She seems a nice enough girl, though not at all the sort I would pick out for him if I wanted him to marry at all, and now he has asked me to release him from his promise—a promise made to the dead. Don't you think that is pretty unreasonable and selfish, and that I am well within my rights in refusing?

MRS. JACKSON.

My friend, I want you to think back to that year when you were first engaged. If your husband's mother had been in your position, and had exacted that he keep to such a promise, would you have considered that you and he were the unreasonable and selfish ones?

Youth turns to youth, and has a right to its own life. Mothers since the world began have had to see their sons leave them for other women. Just as you took your husband from his mother, and it was natural and right, so is it natural and right that this girl should take your son from you. It sounds like a paradox, but the only way you can keep him is by letting him go.

I honestly believe that you yourself will be happier in the end by giving way to them now. Even if he resigns his love and stays single for your sake, do you think it will be with any added respect and affection for you? While he is human he would harbor it against you. And in the end you would find that you had lost him in a far harder way than if you had given him up to the girl he loves. Again, they may decide to take the law into their own hands, anyway, and grasp their happiness while they have the chance, and if they had it to remember that you had tried to part them, there would always be hard feeling between you. Give way gracefully. Go to your son to-day and tell him, "I've been thinking it over and I was wrong. Of course, I do not want you to give up your happiness, and hers. I am not dependent; I do not need you at that price. Father would understand."

And do you keep up your little business; be thankful that you have a circle of friends and customers on whom you can rely, and that you can live your own life without alms from men, even your son.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am a constant reader of ALL-STORY and think it is wonderful. I am a young married woman, only seventeen, and have been married one year Christmas. I am five feet tall and have henna-colored hair—it is real, not dyed—blue eyes and a saucy tip-tilted nose. I am considered nice-looking.

Now the trouble is about my husband. I love him dearly, I am boss at home and every Saturday I get the pay envelope. But we cannot agree on one subject, and that is children. He wants a home, fireside and children. That is his idea of married life. But I think I am too young to be tied down, and told him to wait for another year. But he storms around and declares that he will leave me. I don't think he would leave me because I know he loves me, but I do get tired of this question that pops up all the time.

So will you please print this letter and tell me what you would do? I will be very grateful if you will do so.

Wishing you success,

VIOLETTE.

Yes, you are very young to assume the responsibilities of motherhood, but why did you not think of that before? You and your husband should have compared your "ideas of married life" before marriage. The only thing you can do now is go to your family physician and have him tell you, if he honestly can, that it would be better from the point of view of your health and strength for you to wait awhile before having a child. Many girls have not even attained their full growth at your age. Your husband does love you, and he will no doubt be patient if he is convinced it is for

your sake. On the other hand, he is so good to you that you should be willing to do your share of the conceding and adjusting necessary for a successful marriage.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am a girl seventeen years of age. I have been going with a crowd of girls and boys my age for over two years. I liked all the boys as friends till I met one I like better than all the rest. He is twenty, holds a fine position, has a car, shows you a wonderful time, but still saves some of his salary each week. He has nearly two thousand dollars saved since he left school. Well, I met him through my cousin Mary. We took a liking to each other although she was going with him then. I wouldn't have anything to do with him because my cousin thought she was in love with him. Now, Mary is a beautiful girl, dainty, light brown hair and blue eyes and pretty as a picture. Every one spoils her because she is so pretty. I am the opposite—black eyes and hair, and nothing to rave about, although I try to be sweet and have loads of friends.

Well, one night Mary and Budd and another boy in our crowd, Jim Sands, and I went on a double date. Budd before this kept calling me up wanting me to go different places with him. I wouldn't do it. I don't believe in this so-called necking, and as Budd comes from a fine family I knew any girl would disgust him if he saw her necking. So I let Jim kiss me—we staged a regular necking party and Budd saw us and I did disgust him. He never asked me for another date and I saw nothing of him for two months. All that time he went around with my cousin.

Then one night as I was studying, the doorbell rang. I answered it and it was Budd. He said he wanted to talk to me, so he came in and first he said: "Jean, you know I've been talking to Jim and he told me you weren't that cheap kind of girl, that you just acted that way that once for my benefit." I said nothing. And he went on: "Jean, if I can't go with you, I swear to you right now that I won't go with Mary or anybody else." So I thought it over and as Mary had started to go with another boy I started to go with Buddy. He's the dearest boy—a real pal to me. He's not handsome, but when he smiles his face lights up and you lose your heart. He is always respectful, too, but sometimes he kissed me just once for good night. But when my mother was present he kissed me in front of her, just the same. Some girls would laugh at that and say how silly, but how many young men behave just the same to you when your mother is there as when you're alone with them?

Then I got a letter from Mary saying that she and her new friend had had a quarrel, and that she'd found out that she loves Budd and why had I taken him away from her. Well, you know how I felt. I worried a lot about it and just about that time I took sick and was in bed four weeks. Budd sent me flowers, and called on mother once or twice a week, and did everything he could for me. When I was getting better I got another letter from Mary saying that Budd had been with her again and that he'd told her he loved her. "And if you're my dearest friend you will stay away from him."

The next time I saw Budd I talked with him and he said he hadn't been to see Mary for more than two months. I didn't know which to believe. I love Mary and can't hurt her. I told him not to come around any more. But I'm so unhappy, and miss him so, I don't know what is right to do. Please tell me a way.

JEANIE OF PORTLAND.

I think you have tried to be a good girl, and a true friend to your cousin, but it is not likely that the mere fact of your refusing to go with "Buddy" will make him go with her again. It is wiser and kinder, perhaps, to wait a little while—a month or a few weeks—before going out with him, so as to let her and other people see that he is off with the old love. But after that there is no reason in the world why you and he should not be pals again, and if he asks you for a date, you may accept without compunction. If he does not ask you again, you might write, or have your mother write, and invite him to a little party at your home. It is really your place to "make up." Yes, he seems like a very nice boy, and although you are too young for a serious affair I think you will be very happy in this friendship, and if it grows into something more by and by you will certainly know him well enough to be sure that you are suited to each other.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am writing to you for my girl friend, who can't buck up and write you. She would like to know what you think of a boy like this, and what should she do. We will call him "A." She has known him more than a year and he went out steady with her for three whole months, and then dropped off, saying he was going away. While he was away he never sent her a line to let her know

how he was. Almost a year after that he rang her up and asked her to go out. But she had an engagement with me at the time and she told him so, so he said: "I will bring another fellow around." That was O. K. We went out and had a good time.

He promised to phone her; he did, and said he would see her Thursday at her home. But she has never seen him since. Now what do you think of him? What would you do if he calls up again? I said not to have anything to do with him. Is that right? I hope you will be able to understand what I mean in this letter.

EMMA JANE HALL.

The young man treats your friend rather cavalierly, to be sure, but I think the entire question depends on what excuse he has for not keeping his engagement. If it is a good one, she may make another date with him if she wants to—not too soon.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have been reading some of your answers to lovers' queries. I want to know what you advise in this case. I have been going with a girl for some few months. We don't quarrel much, but we have had two fallings-out. Each time we made up—at least, I did. Lately she doesn't seem to want to be bothered with me. I have told her that I love her, but she only teases me, you might say. Mostly she says, "Oh, you do?" When I escort her home from work she says she has got to go in. She seems to want to get away from me as soon as possible. So I have made it my business not to bother her any more, although I still love her. Will you please tell me what to do.

F. O.

If you really love this girl and want to marry her, why not tell her so? It's the only way to find out the true state of her feelings. If she refuses you, then you will have to make up your mind to forget her, but certainly that will be more satisfactory than parting from her while you are not sure. She may be acting as she does merely because she does not know whether you are serious.

UNDECIDED, MAINE.—If you have to write and ask me or any one else which one you should marry, you should not marry anybody yet. Your own heart will tell you when the time comes. You are too young, not only in years, but in experience, character, disposition, everything, to take such a serious step just now. Be thankful that you do not imagine yourself in love, for you can go about with all your friends and enjoy your youth while you have it.

MRS. M. S., OHIO.—The unpleasant traits your son shows are due, probably, to causes which he will outgrow. He is at a very trying age. Try to be patient with him, to encourage and praise him for the things he does that are right instead of concentrating on those that are wrong. I think you will find in a year or two that he has lost all those habits which distress you so now.

AGNES, MICHIGAN.—I am going to print a letter in the next issue which may help you. The girl who wrote it did just what you are doing and found out that it was a mistake. Of course, every case must be judged on its own merits, but yours strikes me as practically the same as hers. My advice would be, don't give up your old friends for any one. You will regret it if you do.

Choosing a Career

Conducted by
ELIZABETH WRIGHT

HAVE you found your ideal job? Are you satisfied with your present salary? If not, let Miss Wright advise you.

In these pages many new and attractive professions for girls are discussed. If one of these appeals to you, and you wish to learn more about it, address your letter to Elizabeth Wright, care "Choosing a Career" Department, All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York. A stamped, addressed envelope will bring you an answer by mail.

ONE way—and perhaps the best—to begin a gift shop is in connection with a tea-room. The selling begins at once. There is no tedious waiting for customers. People come in for tea, luncheon, or dinner—and buy! At least they have an opportunity to inspect the gifts that are displayed on the shelves and, when the time comes, they will return to purchase them, if they are pleasing and well selected.

In the beginning, unless your capital is very large, you should select a tea-shop where popular prices prevail. People who pay fifty cents to a dollar for their luncheon are willing to spend fifty cents to a dollar on a gift—if they are gift-hunting.

If you have capital and are going to combine with a tea-room where the cheapest table d'hôte luncheon is a dollar and a half, then the whole scheme changes. One can show much more expensive wares.

But taking it for granted that the new merchant is going to begin modestly and feel her way along, here are some suggestions which will work toward her success:

Select a tea-room which has an established clientele. Whether in the city or in the country there are small but very attractive eating places that have an excellent trade. Find one and accept no substitute. All the good will in the world will not help you if no one comes in the tea-room to eat!

Have a definite understanding as to the rent. However, do not sign a lease. Tell the owner of the tea-room that you will remain as long as you find the business profitable, and that you will pay your rent promptly.

Make yourself such a desirable tenant that she will want to keep you and will do everything to assist you in making sales. It is a business in which you must work together. In case of a rush, as during a political convention, a big celebration or a State fair, you may crowd your gifts into a corner to make room. And in normal seasons the tea-room woman will give you extra space to show you that she appreciates your courtesy. Much stress must be laid upon this mutual willingness to help each other.

In your agreement with her stipulate that you are to have a certain number of shelves running around the room. You will need space in the show window. And, above all, a desk in the tea-room where you can make change and do the necessary bookkeeping.

Select nothing that is perishable. There is steam in the tea-room and there are, necessarily, cooking odors. Gifts that absorb smells, or wilt in the steam, must never be chosen. This throws out the whole family of greeting cards and all stationery. No matter how great the demand around holiday time, do not be tempted to go into the handling of these delicate things. It will inevitably lead to trouble with the owner of the tea-room, who cannot be expected to refuse to serve an oyster stew, steaming in its chafing-dish, because you have arranged a set of expensive greeting cards on a shelf right over that table.

This Week's Hint For Earning More Money

There is money to be made right in one's own home by selling eggs.

Get in touch with small farmers living near your town or city. They are glad to sell their eggs at private sale, if they can be sent in quantity all to one customer.

Write to everybody you know outside the city limits. Say that you will handle all the eggs they can send you—if they will make a wholesale rate to you.

Send egg-boxes and egg-crates to them so they can pack easily and ship by parcel post. Each egg must be guaranteed absolutely fresh, the date it is laid stamped on the shell of each egg.

Your neighbors will be steady customers. People around the corner, on the next block, as far as your name and the nature of your business are known, will call or telephone for fresh eggs.

Ten cents on each dozen is not too large a profit for you. This will make the eggs high-priced, but for egg-lovers, those who must have them fresh for breakfast, no sum seems too much.

The egg business is a steady money-maker and lasts all the year round. Fresh-killed chickens, ready for the broiler, can be added as a side line if desired; but the eggs alone will be sufficient to bring a constant flow of dollars into the home.

In selecting your gifts you may think it wise to have a few trifles that are out of the ordinary: a mahogany cigarette box which plays a musical selection when the cover is lifted; an odd little electric reading lamp that can be clamped to the bedside novel; a pair of opera glasses that can be carried in a lady's purse.

Don't forget to be always on the lookout for antiques. Such a prosy old thing as an old-time camphor bottle, a candlestick with a snuffer attached, an old tin treasure chest with padlock, or a glass cookie jar may win its way to the heart and purse of a customer.

Know the story of each article on your shelves. Antiques are interesting only because of their association.

Know the family history of everything you sell, modern or antique.

With the permission of the tea-room woman you may have a small display of fine little rugs. These are hung on the walls. If interesting, such as the artistic hooked rug, or the Persian rug, doorstep size, they will make the tea-room prettier.

During rush hours be always on hand, at your desk. This should be very small and very smart. On the front you may hang a card, saying "This desk for sale." Let it be known that everything in sight is for sale. When the desk is sold replace it with one equally small and smart. It will give you a good turnover.

Your profit on each sale should be one hundred per cent. This is not excessive when you consider. A brass tray, costing ten cents, is easily worth a quarter when an initial has been stenciled in the center. This allows five cents for the material used in the stencil.

Take out a fire insurance policy, also a burglary. With good taste and a natural gift for meeting people you will succeed.

Please Write to Us!

Every day when the mail-man comes around, we look eagerly for personal correspondence from our readers. The happiest moments of our busy day are those in which we receive letters from friends we have never seen—girls who write what they really think of ALL-STORY magazine.

If you're too busy to write a letter, just fill out this coupon and mail it. *Thank you!*

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

Bitter-Sweet .....

The Unwanted Bride.....

The Road Back Home..... .....

Jealous .....

New Year and New Love.....

Palace of Love.....

Love from the Clouds.....

One Supreme Moment.....

Everything But Love—Part I.....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)

ALL-STORY'S HALL OF FAME

Eleanor Elliott Carroll

Author of "THE UNWANTED BRIDE," on Page 366

ELEANOR ELLIOTT CARROLL is the author of over three hundred short stories, travel articles, and several serials, one of which is now being published in book form.

"I come," she says, "from a South Carolina family of pioneer newspaper owners and editors, and my first attempts at writing were made at the age of seven. My big dream was to become a foreign correspondent of an internationally known newspaper, but an early marriage interfered with this high ambition. However, extensive travel throughout Hawaii, the Philippines, and India gave me an opportunity for gleaning data for my travel articles, which were easily disposed of.

"Fiction of the romantic type has always appealed to me, and seven years ago I launched upon this career. I attribute whatever success has been mine to the fact that I can always *live* the emotions of my characters; understand and love youth. My greatest joy is to be surrounded by a circle of young girls and join in their amusements, and I lay proud claim to the firm friendship of many charming young people who enthuse and inspire me.

"My fad, if I can call it such, is to attend all the exciting court trials in the county and in near-by Baltimore, and study the psychology of unfortunate humanity. I have written many stories founded upon my personal impressions of such cases."

Mrs. Carroll would be glad to hear from any readers who wish to write her in care of ALL-STORY magazine.

LOOK FOR THESE

"Spotlight and Lovelight" is the title of Helen Ahern's brand new story to appear in the next issue of ALL-STORY. Did you ever wish that *you* could win a beauty contest and be acclaimed by every one, could visit Atlantic City and compete with famous beauties for the proud title, *Miss America?* Read how a little New York shop girl stood before the judges and—

Then there's another absorbing installment of "Everything But Love," by Mary Frances Doner. And stories by Peggy Gaddis, Eleanor Hammond, Doris Knight Jessee and many others.

In Confidence

Practical First Aid to Everyday Living

Conducted by

DOROTHEA DALE

ANY question about the little problems that confront you daily in your business or social life Mrs. Dale will be glad to answer. No question is too small. Write her about anything that is perplexing you—how to word a letter, how to travel, what present to give, what to say and when, table etiquette, et cetera.

If an emergency arises and you need immediate advice your letter will be answered by return mail, if you will inclose a return envelope stamped and addressed.

All letters will be held in strict confidence.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

My dancing days are over, but I like my boy and girls to have a good time, and I am planning a big dance for them to repay several obligations. They have been asked about a great deal in the last two years and I want them to return some of the invitations. We have a big, old-fashioned house and the floors are not hardwood. Is there anything we can do to make the dancing easier? Also, I want especially to know if my husband and I must stay around all evening or if we can slip away upstairs after supper.

L. M. J.

First, about the floor: go to an upholsterer's and get enough large sheets of the heavy paper they use to cover the floor of the dance room. Over this layer of paper, draw unbleached cotton cloth just as tight as it can possibly be drawn. It will make a very good surface for dancing, and may be improved by a sprinkling of powdered wax, as wood would be. The cotton cloth will be found more satisfactory than linen.

If your young guests are very well acquainted and your daughters are efficient hostesses, it is not necessary for you to remain until the end of the evening, but I believe there is no gathering which is not made pleasanter by the presence of a tactful, understanding older woman. Suppose there are a couple of wallflowers among the girls. It would be your place to sit beside them, talk to them, get together a little circle of others, introduce them to your son and friends of his on whom you could depend to do the right thing, and see to it that they had a good time. There are usually boys in the "stag line," who, either through shyness or selfishness, do not do their share toward entertaining the other guests and being entertained. It would be up to you to mend matters there also. Your husband could probably

help you with the boys, too. To see that everybody is comfortable and well served at supper is, perhaps, your most important duty, but it is not the only one.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

I am a schoolgirl of thirteen and would like very much your advice about Christmas presents for my teachers. One is a young man, another an older man, and there are two young ladies. Our most popular teacher, a woman, is going to be married and leave us Christmas week. Would we be expected to give her something as a class, or each one of us? I cannot think of anything for any of them, so will you please make suggestions?

ANTOINETTA CAPELLINI.

It is a dear and generous thought to want to give each of your teachers something, and if you really feel that pretty cards would not be enough, I'd suggest some Italian sweetmeat or pastry, Antoinetta, something your family are especially fond of, perhaps. Your mother might even teach you how to make a certain delicacy, if you do not know already. Or you might buy each of your teachers a box of *torrone*. Every one likes it, and I think it would be a more original gift than a handkerchief, or a necktie which might not suit, or gloves which might not fit.

As for the teacher who is to be married, your class would not be "expected" to do anything, either singly or collectively, but it would be very nice for you all to contribute as you can, and buy her a lovely vase or a luncheon set or something else for her new home.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

I think ALL-STORY is just great. I get so many new ideas. I need a lot of advice—at least, it seems a lot to me. My son is not quite three years old, but he is so large he looks all of four. So I thought I would start teaching him table manners. My relatives look so disgusted because I let him help himself. He takes potatoes, meat and bread. He takes a small potato, also a small piece of bread, breaks it in two and butters it himself. He tries hard to cut his meat, but, of course, his knife is too dull, so I help him. He uses his fork as nicely as we do, and spills nothing. If I don't let him help himself he is hurt. Is this a bad habit or is it right? I know you can tell me.

I'll ask two more small questions: should you take bread from the plate when it is passed with your fingers or fork? Next, when vegetables are served on a side dish should we eat them with a fork or spoon, and leave them in the little dish at the right side of the plate? Good luck to your department!

ANNA RICE.

You are entirely right to start your little son's training. It is never too early to begin, for the sooner he learns, the more natural will good manners be to him. It is wise to encourage a child to do everything he possibly can do for himself. Teach him to help himself to bread with his fingers, touching only the piece nearest to him. Vegetables are eaten with the fork, no matter how they are served.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

Will you please tell me whether it is correct to wear colored slippers with a black velvet dress and, if not, what kind of shoes and stockings should be worn?

ALICE R.

Is it an evening dress, or an afternoon one? In the evening you might wear gold or silver slippers with stockings to match. My personal vote, however, would be for black at either time. Satin is very unyielding to the foot, but, if you can wear it comfortably, black satin pumps are both neat and smart. Patent leather or suède are both good, or you might have a pair of up-to-the-minute slippers of black lizard, or a combination of lizard and patent. If the slippers are plain, it would be very effective to have buckles to match the ornaments on your gown—in either steel, silver or bright stones. As for stockings, nothing can be better than gray, in any shade you prefer from "moonlight" to dove, very sheer for evening, a little heavier for afternoon or street wear.